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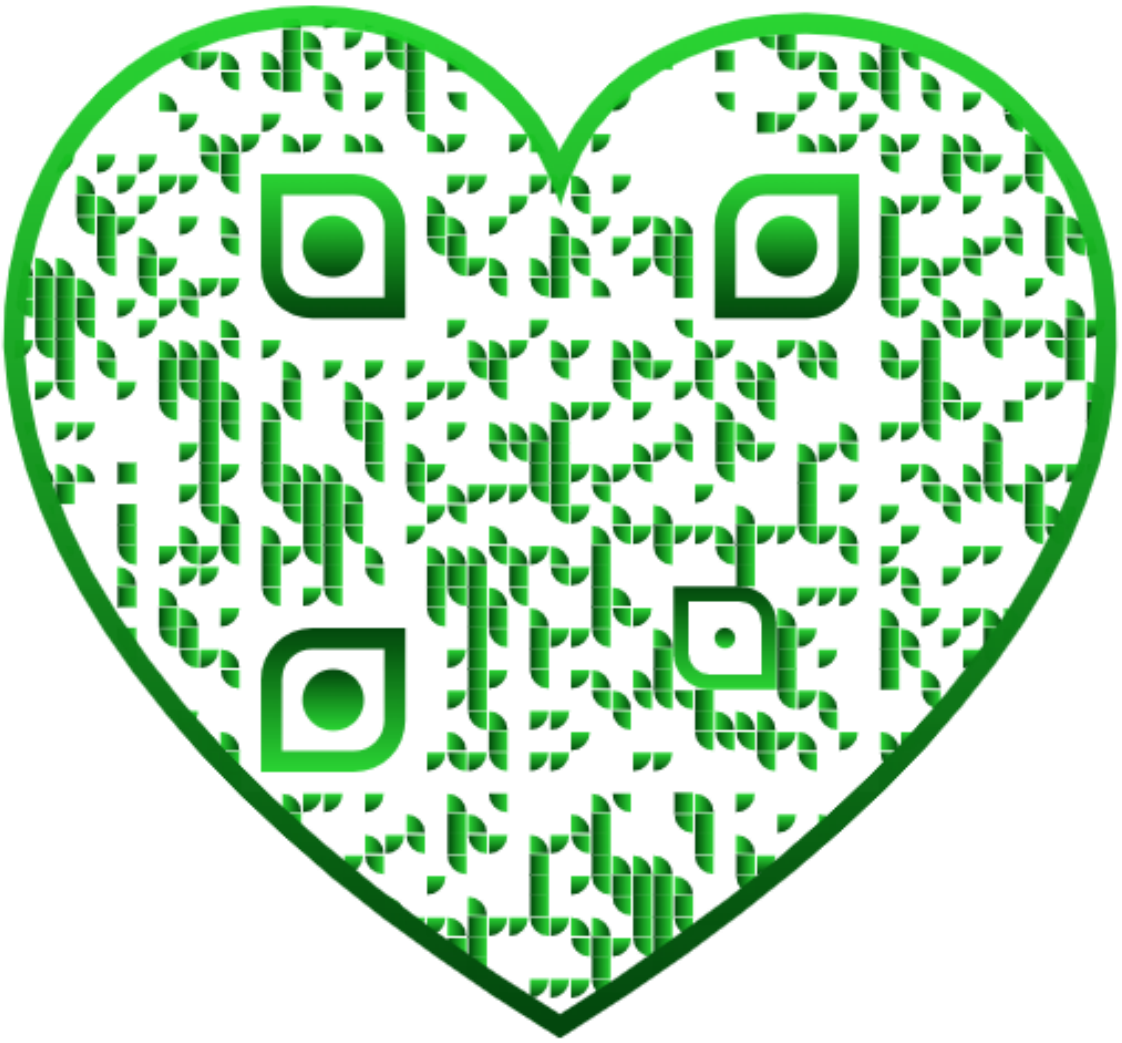

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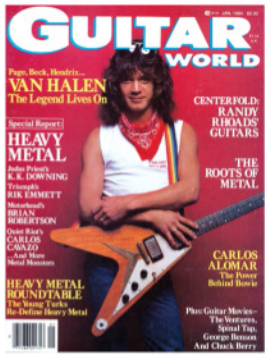
WOODSHED

VOL. 45 | NO. 5 | MAY 2024

HOW 1984 CAN WE GET?

SOMETIME IN LATE 1983, while Van Halen were working on the album that would become *1984*, photographer Glen La Ferman shot a series of photos of Eddie Van Halen standing against a red backdrop. Eddie was wearing a red bandana, a white "If they can't take a joke" T-shirt and, best of all, the 1958 Gibson Flying V that can be heard all over the album. As you can see below [*left*], one of La Ferman's photos wound up on the cover of *Guitar World's* January 1984 issue. So, when it came time to celebrate the 40th anniversary of so many great guitar albums, including Van Halen's *1984*, we couldn't think of a better, more fitting plan than to get in touch with La Ferman and request a photo from the same shoot. Sure, it's a bit "*Guitar World* is celebrating themselves as they celebrate Van Halen," but hey, it works! Anyway, we're glad to have Glen back in the fold (Coincidentally, he also shot the Joe Perry cover shown on page 27). And, if anyone out there is interested, the "new" photo [*right*] was indeed shot a few frames *after* the original photo, which is only fitting!



While I'm here (well, I'm always here), let me officially thank the team of writers who came together to make this issue — and I'm mostly thinking about the massive 1984 feature at the moment — a reality, including Richard Bienstock, Chris Gill, Andrew Daly, Ryan Reed, Alan Paul, Amit Sharma, Mark McStea and Bill DeMain.

— Damian Fanelli

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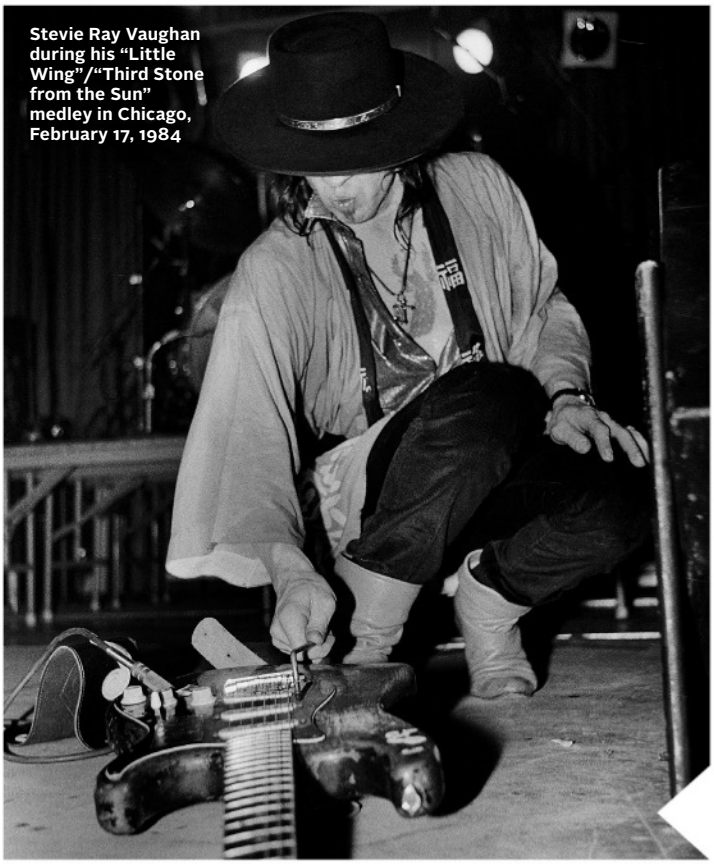
CYNTHIA MOORHEAD (HUMAN) CLAUDIA SCHMIDT/SKETCHY PEDALS (PEDAL) FUTURE (GW; ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHER: GLEN LA FERMAN)

CONTENTS

VOL. 45 | NO. 5 | MAY 2024



Stevie Ray Vaughan during his "Little Wing"/"Third Stone from the Sun" medley in Chicago, February 17, 1984

28 EARL SLICK

The venerable (not to mention prolific) session ace recounts fast times with John Lennon and David Bowie and tells us why he turned down David Coverdale's Whitesnake offer

32 ALEX LIFESON

The Rush legend offers a deep dive into his new line of signature Lerxst gear — amps, pedals and the new Limelight guitar (which is based on his original Hentor Sportscaster)

38 ACE FREHLEY

Guitar World spent some quality time at Space Ace's pad to shoot the breeze, check out his stuff and dissect his groovin' new album, *10,000 Volts*

46 THE KILLER GUITAR ALBUMS OF 1984

Did you ever notice how many great guitar albums came out in 1984? We did! In this issue, we provide a month-by-month reminder of all the great releases (including everyone from Albert King to Pantera to a reunited Yardbirds) and revisit the making of Van Halen's *1984*, Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Couldn't Stand the Weather*, Metallica's *Ride the Lightning*, Iron Maiden's *Powerslave*, Prince's *Purple Rain*, King Crimson's *Three of a Perfect Pair*, Steve Vai's *Flex-Able* and more. Featuring new interviews with **Vivian Campbell, Yngwie Malmsteen, Steve Vai, Alex Lifeson, Adrian Smith, Adrian Belew** and **Steve Lukather**

TRANSCRIBED

"Still Loving You"
by Scorpions
PAGE 88

"Save Me"
by Jelly Roll
PAGE 96

"Even Flow"
by Pearl Jam
PAGE 98

DEPARTMENTS

12 SOUNDING BOARD

15 TUNE-UPS

Aerosmith's Joe Perry revisits his 1987 *Guitar World* cover, Anna Calvi tells us how she scores *Peaky Blinders*, Europe's John Norum gets the Inquirer treatment and Mike Ness discusses a classic Social Distortion album. Plus Emanuel Casablanca, Ava Mendoza, Rock City Machine Co. and Isaiah Mitchell's pedalboard

75 SOUNDCHECK

75. Peavey Classic 20 112 combo
77. Martin GPCE Inception Maple
78. Jackson Pro Plus Series Dinky MDK
80. Funny Little Boxes Skeleton Key
81. Seymour Duncan PowerStage 100

82 COLUMNS

82. In Deep
by Andy Aledort
83. Tales from Nerdville
by Joe Bonamassa
84. Melodic Muse
by Andy Timmons
85. Live from Flat V
by Josh Smith

87 PERFORMANCE NOTES

110 POWER TOOLS

No single product played a bigger role in defining the sound of rock in the Nineties than the Mesa-Boogie Dual Rectifier. The irony of this is that the Dual Rectifier was originally conceived to satisfy the demands of guitarists during the late Eighties!

COVER PHOTO: GLEN LA FERMAN / @GLENLAFERMANPHOTOGRAPHY

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

SOUNDING BOARD

Got something you want to say? **EMAIL US AT:** GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com

SYLVAIN GABOURY/FILMMAGIC COURTESY OF JIMMY BROWN (INSET) ANA BLAKELY (GIBSONS)

COMPETELY RANDOM PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

On October 25, 2005, **Charo** — the great Spanish singer, actress and (most importantly) flamenco guitarist — dropped by the *GW* offices in NYC. Besides pointing to our Jimmy Page-fronted May 2005 issue and taking photos with a few editors, including Jimmy Brown [*inset*], Charo was in town promoting her 2005 album, *Charo and Guitar* (which, BTW, features a killer version of "Malagueña"). As part of the press proceedings, Paul Riario interviewed Charo for the February 2006 issue of *Guitar World Acoustic*. "One thing she said that really stuck with me was that she was a student of Andrés Segovia in her formative years," Riario says today. "As her celebrity status grew, it would sometimes overshadow her incredible talent as a flamenco guitarist. She told me about the time she was shopping in Bloomingdales in NYC and noticed that Segovia was in the same store. While all the clerks were fawning over her, she kept pointing out to them that that man — Segovia — was the most important musician in the world. To her, he was the celebrity. She said she called out to him to come talk to her, but for unknown reasons he ignored her. She speculated that her popularity at the time might've made him feel uncomfortable to be seen with her. This incident broke her heart because she had so much respect for him." — *DF*

Not jumping for joy over Green Day...

Just got my March [*2024*] issue and to my surprise, of all the hundreds of guitar players, you chose to put Mr. American Idiot himself on your cover, only days after he insulted half of the country because of his political views!

He and every other entertainer and athlete can vote for whoever they want and join someone's campaign or hand out flyers, but when they are on stage or on the field they should leave their politics at home and entertain!

Does this idiot think he is smarter or better informed than us because he can write catchy songs? When you put a divisive and polarizing person like him on your cover shortly after that stunt he pulled, it makes you look partisan. As a subscriber for over 30 years, I have never noticed any political stance until now and hope this was an oversight or error in judgment.

The name of the magazine is *Guitar World*, not *Songwriter World*, and there are soooo many great guitar players out there who are more deserving of your cover.

— *K.D., New York*

... But Stiff Little Fingers get a big thumb's up

I just read your piece on Jake Burns and Stiff Little Fingers [*February 2024*]. Loved it! I would love to hear anything/everything about how Bill Nelson's Red Noise made *Art/Empire/Industry*. [*It was an*] amazing undiscovered album back in the day.

— *Glen Taylor*

An amazing batch of Gibsons!

I wanted to share a photo of some of my rare pieces: [*from left*] 1959 Flying V "Landfill V," 1959 Les Paul "Gabriel Burst," 1959 Les Paul "Kossoff Burst," 1957 Les Paul "Bishop Burst" and 1958 Flying V "Diamond Back" (which belonged to Kirk Hammett). Anway, I just wanted to share if y'all wanted to use the photos.

— *Kris Blakely*

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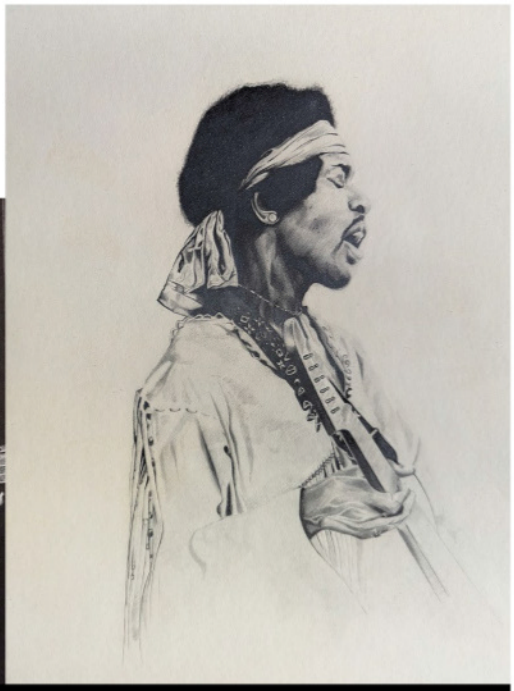
READER ART
OF THE MONTH

If you've created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of *Guitar World*, email **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com** with a .jpg or screenshot of the image.

And (um, obviously...), please remember to include your name!

KEITH RICHARDS BY BRIAN OLIVER



JIMI HENDRIX BY TERRI McGUNEGILL

DEFENDERS *of the Faith*

Jay Heilman

AGE: 42
HOMETOWN: Zephyrhills, FL
GUITARS: PRS Tremonti Signature SE, Yamaha Pacifica, Fender 60SCE dreadnought, Fender Malibu, Ibanez Soundgear bass
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Pink Floyd "Comfortably Numb," Deftones "My Own Summer (Shove It)," Styx "Blue Collar Man," Creed "Ode" and other classic rock
GEAR I WANT MOST: Epiphone Custom Jerry Cantrell Prophecy, Fender Stratocaster Clapton Signature

Tim Florschuetz

AGE: 58
LOCATION: Phoenix, AZ
GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul '58 Custom, Gibson SG Custom, Guild F-50 acoustic, Ernie Ball Music Man Bongo bass, etc.
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Fleetwood Mac "Oh Well," Frank Zappa "Muffin Man," Eagles "Bitter Creek," Led Zeppelin "The Rain Song" and *Physical Graffiti* sides 1 and 2, the Kinks "Sunny Afternoon," Joe Walsh "Life's Been Good," Buddy Guy "End of the Line" and original compositions
GEAR I WANT MOST: Ernie Ball Music Man Axis

Mike Maly

AGE: 64
HOMETOWN: Waunakee, WI
GUITARS: Gibsons: Les Paul Custom Pro, ES-335 Dot Reissue, '61 Reissue SG. Fenders: Mexican Stratocaster, American Standard Telecaster
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Badfinger "Baby Blue," Robert Palmer "Bad Case of Lovin' You," Santana "Black Magic Woman," Queen "Need Your Lovin' Tonight"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Magnatone amp, wireless system

Are you a Defender of the Faith? Send a photo, along with your answers to the questions above, to **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com**. And pray!

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TUNE-UPS

INQUIRER: JOHN NORUM 17

18 MJ LENDERMAN

MIKE NESS 20

EMANUEL CASABLANCA 22

ROCK CITY MACHINE CO. 24

ISAIAH MITCHELL 25

AVA MENDOZA 26

JOE PERRY LOOKS BACK 27

Blinded by the Light

U.K. SINGER-SONGWRITER — AND SELF-CONFESSED JEFF BUCKLEY FANATIC — ANNA CALVI DISCUSSES HER FAVORITE TOOLS FOR COMPOSING THE MUSIC FOR NETFLIX'S *PEAKY BLINDERS*

By Amit Sharma

FOR MOST GUITAR players, composing music is a means for self-expression that often can provide the deepest and most profound insight into their hearts, minds and souls. The same can also be said of Anna Calvi's three solo albums, though by the London-based songwriter's own admission it was a somewhat different approach for her original score for *Peaky Blinders* seasons 5 and 6, released on CD and vinyl at the beginning of this year. In these creative situations, she reasons, it's not her own story being told, but rather that of the characters depicted on screen, so her primary objective is to join the dots between what people see and what they hear.

What does a show like *Peaky Blinders* call for, musically? The themes are quite bleak, so you tend to work in minor keys. Yeah, I wouldn't say it's happy music! But it's treading a line between violence and beauty, which is essentially the ethos of the show. Some of it feels quite punk in that it's adjacent to the norm and quite rebellious. I really try to score [*lead character*] Tommy Shelby's inner-voice with my guitar. It's nice to work in a more philosophical and abstract way, rather than the usual "I'm a guitarist!" approach. I'd play with a bow or hit the strings with the guitar on the ground, all sorts of weird stuff. Because my job was to score what was happening in that character's head rather than anything about *me*. I enjoy the freedom it brings because I'm not solely responsible for the vision.

"I prefer to have a real relationship with each instrument," Anna Calvi says. "I'm a bit of a monogamist in that sense"

PHOTO BY EMMA NATHAN

Anna Calvi performs at the 2019 Legitimate Peaky Blinders Festival in Birmingham, England

OLLIE MILLINGTON/REDFERNS

"Gina," for example, is a fitting homage to the character seen on screen.
I have to say Gina Gray is quite a personality! I love it when certain people jump out of the screen at you, and it's important for the music to match those moments in terms of charisma. With Tommy, because he's the main character, I would often start with a note and let it descend into chaos, which is how his mind works. And that's why there are a lot of descending slide motifs — because Tommy himself is sliding downwards.

So what tips can you offer all the budding scorers and composers out there?
Trusting your gut instinct is really important. You shouldn't be afraid of those first ideas because you're watching a scene and responding to it with your guitar in a more emotional way. I often find those moments are my most productive ones... so always remember to press Record, because you're using your heart over your head. I find the more you overthink things, the worse it gets. My method is to find a sound I believe in and stick with it. That's my general approach to tones.

That makes sense given how you've stuck with a 1997 sunburst American Standard Telecaster for much of your career.
When I bought that guitar I knew *nothing* about Telecasters! I literally just got it because I saw Jeff Buckley had been using them. But it made me a better player because I loved the sound it was making. I'd never had that before. When you enjoy hearing yourself play, it spurs you on. Telecasters can cut through so well, but they also have this chiming quality, especially with reverb. They can be very angelic and subtle compared to something like a Gibson, but when you add distortion they can get growly. I find they respond to the character of the player better than other guitars.

What else did you use on the new soundtrack?
The sunburst Tele did most of it, though I also used my Gretsch baritone for certain moments. Those are my two main guitars, plugged into my Vox AC30. I own a couple more but don't play them much and look at them as spares. I prefer to have a real relationship with each instrument. I'm a bit of a monogamist in that sense. I want to know them really well instead of going around loads of different models.

We're also hearing reverbs, slapback echoes and tremolo on tracks like "You're Not God," "Tommy's Plan" and "Esme's Dream."

"I really try to score Tommy Shelby's inner voice with my guitar"

I find tremolo works really well with soundtrack stuff because it provides texture without too much information. You always have to play less than you think you should on stuff like this, so it's nice to have a pedal to help pulse away behind whatever else is going on. My main overdrive is a Crowther Hot Cake, which is quite warm and retro-sounding, and I use my T-Rex Room-Mate Tube Reverb and an EarthQuaker delay for wetness.

Other songs like "Black Tuesday" feature some aggressive slide guitar work...
I remember it was a long scene and the director told me to just solo for six minutes... which felt like a lot! I was intimidated at first. You can hear the desperation and sleeplessness in what I'm playing, and that ties into the story. Jack White is a big slide hero of mine. Obviously I've listened to a lot of Robert Johnson, but as a young adult I was listening to the White Stripes and learning from their modern take on it. I almost think of slide as a human voice. You get these microtones from going into and out of notes, to the point where it's kinda *not* in tune but it sounds so cool.

Europe's Joey Tempest [*left*] and John Norum on stage in Trondheim, Norway, June 11, 2023

INQUIRER
JOHN NORUM

THE EUROPE GUITARIST DISCUSSES HIS "FINAL COUNTDOWN" STRAT AND THE VALUABLE SIX-STRING LESSON HE LEARNED FROM SINGER DON DOKKEN

Q: What was your first guitar?
A Japanese-made Arbiter, which I got when I was around 12. It had an SG-style body with a Fender headstock and a tremolo bar.

Q: What was the first song you learned to play?
My mum played acoustic, so she showed me my first chords. Because she was into Elvis, she taught me songs like "Jailhouse Rock" and "Hound Dog."

Q: What was your first gig?
I was about 14 and it was at this school-dance thing in Upplands Väsby, a town just outside of Stockholm where I grew up. It was a three-piece band with me — the original drummer in Europe, Tony Reno, and a bass player called Peter Olsson. We played cover songs from Deep Purple and UFO.

Q: Ever had an embarrassing moment on stage?
It was during the Scandinavian tour we did for *The Final Countdown* in 1986. It was the last gig of the tour in Stockholm, in front of a home crowd. We were excited and ran out on stage, and I tripped on a cable. When we began the first song, I didn't realize the cable had broken, so it was dead quiet, and this whole thing was being filmed for TV! We had to stop, change the cord and start the whole thing over again.

Q: What's your favorite piece of gear?

"I didn't realize the cable had broken, so it was dead quiet, and this was being filmed for TV! We had to stop... and start the whole thing over again"

My first real amp that I got back in the Seventies, a Marshall '68 Super Lead plexi. I'd been in the hospital for seven weeks after I had an accident, and my mom wanted to give me something special. It cost her a hundred dollars.

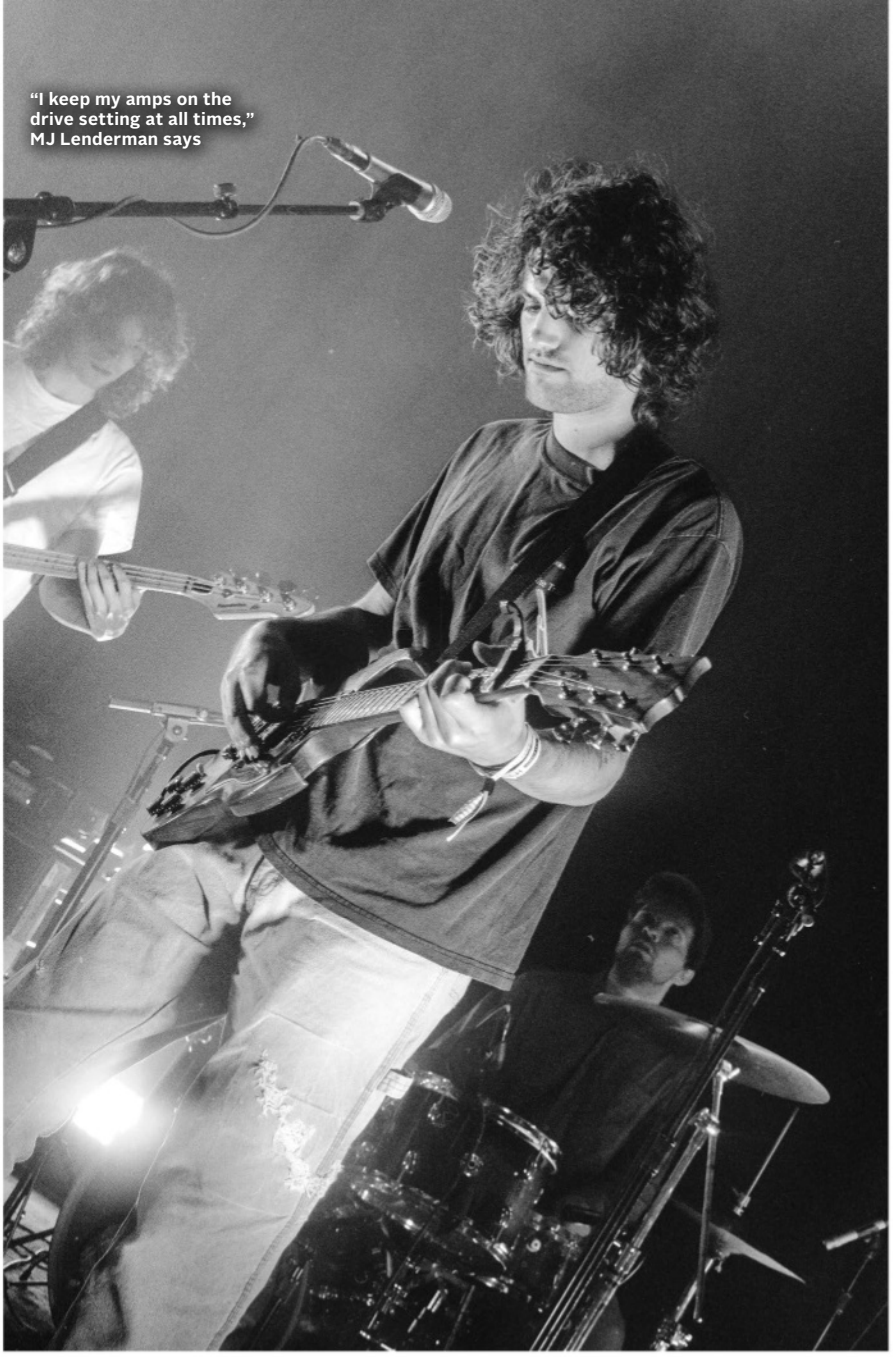
Q: The building is burning down; what one guitar would you save?
My '65 Strat, which I've had since 1984 and which has a very unique tone. I've used it on pretty much every album since 1984. It's been on at least a couple of songs on each record. It's what I used on "The Final Countdown" solo, and I used it exclusively on my first solo album [Total Control], which came out in '87. The whole album is just that guitar. It's also the only guitar I still have from the Eighties, so it has a lot of history.

Q: What's the last time you practiced, and what did you play?
Last night, though I was really only noodling. I was sitting at home, messing around because we're going to start working on a new Europe album soon.

Q: What aspect of the guitar would you like to be better at?
To not just play licks and fast runs and things like that. It's just pretty pointless to me at this time. In the Eighties, I was very much into playing fast and wanting to be the best and all that stuff. Later on I realized it was just a waste of time. I try to keep the playing as melodic as possible. I'll always try to come up with a melody, kind of like how a singer does, so I'll listen to what's going on in the chorus and vocals. When I come to do a guitar solo, I'll take a piece from either vocal or chorus line and add that into the solo.

Q: What advice would you give to your younger self?
I should've made my focus a bit more on the rhythm side of playing. I was pretty much just playing leads instead of focusing on groove and rhythm. I didn't become a good rhythm player until I started working with Don Dokken on his *Up from the Ashes* album in 1990. That's when I realized how important it was. I learned a lot from working with Don. In the studio he'd often say, "It doesn't groove enough, so do it again." And because we all played live in the studio, the rhythm and groove became very important. It was hard work at first, but after a while I enjoyed it. Guitar is not just about playing lead; rhythm is very important. *— Joe Matera*

PER OLE HAGEN/REDFERNS



"I keep my amps on the drive setting at all times," MJ Lenderman says

MJ Lenderman

WITH A BLAZING (NOT TO MENTION "FLUID LIKE THE WIND") BAND BEHIND HIM, INDIE ROCK'S LEADING OVERDRIVE PURVEYOR TAKES HIS BEST ONE-MAN-BAND MATERIAL TO WILD NEW PLACES

By Richard Bienstock

MJ LENDERMAN IS a big fan of live albums, from the Band's *Rock of Ages* and the Grateful Dead's *Europe '72* to Drive-By Truckers' *Alabama Ass Whuppin'* and "a million Neil Young records." But his decision to add his own offering to the live album canon was for a more specific reason. "My live show sounds different from the records, because when I'm in the studio I'm playing most of the instruments," the Asheville, North Carolina-based songwriter and multi-instrumentalist says. "Onstage, it's a different thing."

In-the-know rock fans, particularly those who favor bands on the rootsier — and noisier — end of the spectrum, may be familiar with Lenderman from his widescreen guitar work with alt-Americana darlings Wednesday (whose 2023 album, *Rat Saw God*, was a mainstay of end-of-year best-of lists). But in his solo music, Lenderman tends to handle almost everything, from songwriting and production to vocals, drums, bass and, of course, guitars, himself. His most recent studio full-length, 2022's *Boat Songs*, showcased his idiosyncratic mix of relaxed, pedal-steel-inflected alt-country grooves and strident, fuzzed-out six-string excursions (he counts J Mascis, Thurston Moore and Neil Young among his six-string idols) wrapped in wry and often humorous story-songs delivered in a laid-back, breezy drawl.

On the new concert document, *And the Wind (Live and Loose!)*, Lenderman offers a more expansive, and, as the title implies, looser take on the *Boat Songs* tracks. For the majority of the songs, captured at the Lodge Room in L.A., Lenderman played a Fender Jazzmaster through Vox AC15 and Fender Deluxe amps, while the remainder of the tracks, from Chicago's Lincoln Hall, saw him using his '79 Gibson Firebrand SG and a Fender Blues Deluxe combo. In both cases, he employed his usual pedal setup — a Dunlop Cry Baby wah, a Boss DD-7 Digital Delay and, most importantly, his trusty Death by Audio Interstellar Overdriver, which provides his characteristic gnarly lead tones. His secret to getting things really dirty? "I keep my amps on the drive setting at all times," Lenderman says. "And then the Interstellar Overdriver adds an extra layer to it."

In the performances captured on *And the Wind (Live and Loose!)*, he and his band play with tempos and tones, injecting the punky "SUV" with extra rhythmic thrust and adding space for him to lay out sprawling, squiggly leads on the Crazy Horse-ish "Tastes Just Like It Costs." Unlike in the studio, Lenderman takes advantage of being able to play with and off of the musicians accompanying him — a cast that, he says, can vary from show to show. "The lineup you're hearing on the album is the most set the band has been," he says. "But depending on what city we're in, if there's a friend there who plays an instrument and that I trust, I'll have them sit in, too."

Lenderman laughs. "So the band is fluid — like the wind."

YAILENE LEYVA

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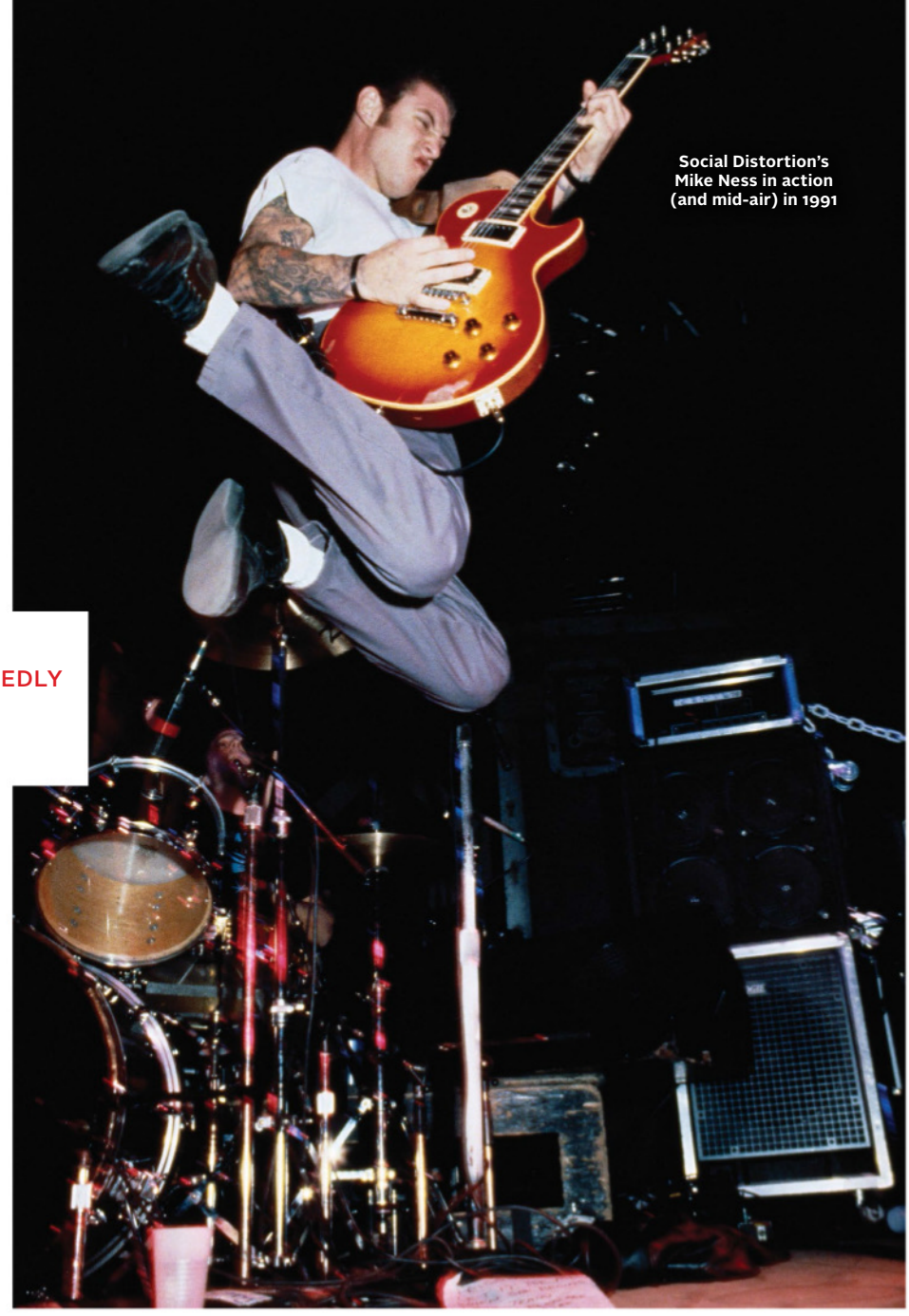
LOST CLASSICS
Social Distortion

MIKE NESS EXPLAINS WHY THE CALIFORNIA PUNKS TOOK A DECIDEDLY ROOTSY LEFT TURN WITH THEIR SELF-TITLED 1990 ALBUM (YEAH, THE ONE WITH "RING OF FIRE")

By Mark McStea



Social Distortion's Mike Ness in action (and mid-air) in 1991

SOCIAL DISTORTION FORMED in 1978, and amid ever-changing lineups, the presence of singer/guitarist Mike Ness has been a constant. With the release of their self-financed debut album, *Mommy's Little Monster*, in 1983, they rapidly became one of the biggest names on the California punk scene, influencing countless bands in their wake. Ness's well-documented addiction problems then saw the band stall, with a five-year gap between their debut record and its 1988 follow-up, *Prison Bound*. Ness knew he had to prioritize his recovery over the band's progress at that time. "There wouldn't have *been* a band if I didn't sort myself out," he says.

Social Distortion continued to play regularly, maintaining their hardcore, loyal fan base even when they were dormant on the recording front. Those followers were initially taken by surprise with the release of *Prison Bound*, which saw Ness draw heavily on the rootsy American genres of blues, rock 'n' roll, country and rockabilly to deliver a record that was considerably different from the straightforward punk of their debut.

Two years later, the band signed to Epic, giving Ness some much appreciated financial security. "I was able to give up my day job as a house painter and focus on music," he says. With the machinery of a major label behind them, the band's third album, simply titled *Social Distortion* (1990), saw them achieve their best sales to date and established them as major-league players. The record firmly defined the Social Distortion blueprint for every album that followed, with Ness utilizing the soulful roots of Americana harnessed to the raw energy of punk, as the ultimate means of expressing his unique musical mojo.

Ness has been out of action for more than a year since receiving a diagnosis of tonsil cancer at the end of 2022; but he has come a long way down the road to recovery, scheduling live dates for Social Distortion this spring.

How's your health?
I'm doing a lot better, continuing to make progress and working hard on my rehab, but it's been a tough time. It's been almost a year now. Head and neck cancers are a lot different from other cancers; it's not an easy surgery. I've had to go through intensive rehab just for speech and swallowing, let alone singing. I feel like I still have a lot of purpose in this world, so we'll see how things go.

When the self-titled album came out in 1990, it was quite a departure from 1983's *Mommy's Little Monster*, although *Prison Bound* probably eased the transition. Were you worried about alienating that hardcore bunch of original fans?
At that time, I was really getting back in touch with a lot of the music I grew up with, which was American roots music. I saw all these other bands bringing those influences to their music and I thought there was no reason I shouldn't. A lot of punk, British and American, had an acknowledgement of Fifties music, even if it was in the way that bands dressed. Even the

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Sex Pistols' album has Steve Jones playing Chuck Berry licks all over the place. In the mid-Eighties a lot of bands started to sound the same; if you wanted to stand out, you needed to do something different. For me, it was bringing that American roots music into the sound. Why can't you do both?

The cover of Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire" seemed to be a defiant nailing of your colors to the mast of Americana.
That's absolutely the case. I got a lot of flak from my peers about it, asking why I was going to do that, and I said it's because I thought it was cool. [*Laughs*] I remember thinking, 'I don't need to check in with anyone else about what I want to do in my band,' you know? People were telling me I couldn't do that, and I was saying, "Whose fucking band is this?" [*Laughs*] The release of the self-titled album was definitely a defining time for what I wanted to do and say musically. I didn't know if people would like things like "Sick Boys" and "Story of My Life," but I thought there was a similarity to some of the songs on *Prison Bound*. I guess I write ballads in the old-time sense of that word — songs that tell a story.

Did you have any sense that — with the subsequent change in direction — you could alienate fans of the first album?
There's always that risk, but I've learned that you don't get anywhere if you don't take a risk. The true spirit of punk is to evolve. You want to maintain the primitive spirit, but the important things in punk for me were honesty, energy and attitude, so as long as I didn't lose those things, I felt safe.

Was there much in the way of pre-production ahead of the recording sessions with producer Dave Jerden?
Not really in a rehearsal room or whatever. I did give Dave a tape with the songs we were going to record, but he seemed happy with everything we planned to do. He always made things very comfortable for me, letting me go with how I felt things should be, while he took care of the technical side of things. That was one way of working, which I enjoyed. Michael Beinhorn produced *White Light, White Heat, White Trash* in 1992. He took a very different approach. I came in with 12 songs, played them to him and he told me to keep writing. [*Laughs*] Initially, I thought, What the fuck? [*Laughs*] That was a good thing in its own way as it pushed me to come up with some of my best songs.

What were the primary guitars and amps that you used?
I think I was definitely using Les Pauls, but not with P90s; that came after I toured with Neil Young and learned about tones from watching what he was doing. For amps it would have been Marshalls and Fender combos in various configurations. Dennis [*Danell*], who played rhythm guitar, was playing old Les Paul Juniors. He always had a knack for finding great old gear.

"Let It Be Me" seems to be channeling Johnny Thunders and Ace Frehley.
Those are two of my favorite guitarists. To me, early Kiss was better than the New York Dolls. They were both playing a similar kind of blues-based rock 'n' roll, but Johnny Thunders was always a big influence for me. The influence of Kiss was massive; they had a huge impact on me, as much as the Stones and the Ramones. I don't think Kiss get their due credit.

"Ball and Chain" almost connects the dots between the Clash and Bruce Springsteen.
Yeah, I get that. It's kinda like a ballad again, but in fact maybe it's more like a prayer. [*Laughs*] I injured my left hand when I was 18, and because of that, I had to pick chords differently, and that impacted the way I'd play blues scales a lot. I think that fed into the way that a lot of my solos became more thematic in terms of stating melodies rather than wailing on scales. I was able to take a bad situation with my hand and make it into a good one by adapting what I played. I think that approach informs the sense of scale on this song. The Buzzcocks were another factor in that melodic approach for me. I always really liked the way that the solos on their records would be a re-stating of the melody from the song.

"Drug Train" is the last track on the album, and it appropriately moves the band furthest into straightforward bluesy rock 'n' roll.
Yeah, this states clearly that we're going to do what we want, without the conventions of punk or anything. When you listen to real, old blues, it doesn't get more punk. The honesty and emotion of that music are a real good fit for me.

What got you into playing?
Listening to the radio when I was about five or six. Everything I was hearing was taking me on a journey in my mind and firing up the urge to want to try to play music.

What's your guitar-buying history?
At first, I had a couple of $40 Japanese electrics that weren't much good. My first decent guitar was an early Seventies SG that I'd saved up for. When I started to make some money from the band, my first big purchase would have been when I got my first '79 goldtop Deluxe. I had a deal with Gibson at one point where I could get Les Pauls at factory prices. What I'd do, when I was on the road, was take them into pawn shops and sell them and use the money to put toward older Les Pauls.

Do you use your signature models?
I don't, although they are really great guitars. I think there's a certain vibe about my original — the one the signature model is modeled on — that I can't find in another guitar. It just doesn't have the road years under its belt. It's just that old pair of shoes that's a perfect fit.

It's ironic that they cost more than twice as much as an actual 1979 goldtop Les Paul Custom.
It is kinda weird. I never realized they'd be so expensive when they suggested that they'd make a signature model. I'm working on an idea with them to see if they can do some kind of more affordable signature model that would be a lot more accessible.

How do you feel about the album more than 30 years later?
If I ever hear tracks from it, I'm always happy with the way they turned out. I'm not one of those people who listens back and wishes I'd done everything differently. I don't listen to my own music very often, but it is good to listen to your old stuff every now and then. It's good to connect with the spirit that I was capturing back then. Sometimes I wonder where I got the ideas from for some of the songs. There are things that wouldn't even occur to me now.

What's coming up?
I was halfway through recording the next album when I got cancer, so that's had to go on hold while I've been working on getting better. I had rough guide vocals laid down, and when I listen to the tracks I think they're some of my best work, so I'm looking forward to finishing the album. It's going to be a really great record. I'm going on the road in the spring, which will be the first time I've sung live since the cancer on my tonsils. I've been doing my therapy and working hard. There's a lot of pressure knowing that I've got shows booked, but it's a good pressure as it puts a lot of focus on my efforts. I guess the album won't be finished until I complete the tour, by which time I hope my voice will be back to full strength, which means the record probably won't be out until 2025. It seems a long way off, but it will be well worth the wait.

"In the short and long term, I'd like to remain an ambassador for the blues," Emanuel Casablanca says

Strung Out on Thrills

FOR BROOKLYN'S EMANUEL CASABLANCA, IT WAS THAT AGE-OLD STRUGGLE BETWEEN BASKETBALL, SKATEBOARDING AND GUITAR. LUCKILY, GUITAR WON OUT — AND MODERN BLUES IS ALL THE BETTER FOR IT

By Andrew Daly

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, has long been associated with indie, punk and jazz, but for the most part, blues has been overlooked. Thankfully, Brooklyn native Emanuel Casablanca didn't get the memo. In fact, he's doing everything he can to move the blues needle into the red.

Interestingly, before he made music his life's work, Casablanca wasn't focused on the blues at all. "I was a competitive basketball player since I was around 10," he says. "I played in school and summer leagues, so it occupied my life all through high school, prep school and the beginning of college. I never even had a Christmas break until I quit playing basketball."

Emanuel's love for music and guitar won out, leading him down his current path. But unlike some, Emanuel doesn't feel that the blues needs saving, nor is he beholden to its past, a mindset that probably comes from his oddball origin story. "I chose guitar over basketball and started going to the music halls on my days off," he says. "That's when I learned there were two things I always wanted to do: play the guitar and skateboard. When I turned 22, I had a little over $100 in my bank account and flipped a coin to decide what I should buy with the money. Heads was a guitar, tails was a skateboard. It landed on heads, and I went on Craigslist and found a used acoustic for $50. I taught myself as much as possible."

These days, Emanuel can frequently be found gigging around Brooklyn. He's taken some flak for his original take on the blues, but in his mind, that's better than being boring. "When it comes to creating art, nothing is off limits," he says. "I hate to sound like a purist, but I believe music is the opportunity for you to express yourself however you feel fit. If people don't like overblown solos, don't listen to tracks with overblown solos. At the end of the day, I think for musicians, and definitely for me, it's about creating music in the way that moves me and listeners."

Did you grow up in a musical household?

My mother was a music teacher. She started me on violin when I was four. I remember being five or six and asking her if I could get a "rock guitar." She said she wanted me to learn a "real instrument" first. She never got me that guitar, no matter how many times I asked; years later, I realized it would be up to me to get my own guitar.

NATALIJA BUBALO (BOTH PHOTOS)

Where did the attraction to the blues come from?
As *cliché* as it sounds, I didn't choose the blues; the blues chose me. I was a late bloomer on the guitar. I got a basketball scholarship to go to college and quit playing my sophomore year, losing my scholarship. From there, I couldn't afford to go to that school any longer, so I transferred to Morehouse College in Atlanta for the first time in my academic life. I had no obligations other than attending class and getting good grades.

Once the guitar entered the picture, what made it stick?
I love songs and poetry, and more than loving songs, I love to write them. Songs make the most sense when developed and created on the guitar. I am not able to create as well as I do on any other instrument. Secondly, I am a competitor. As a former athlete, competition is in my bones, and I always want to be the best I can be. My fiancée gets frustrated with me sometimes because I'll see someone playing the guitar who does something advanced. I will get up and grab my guitar, and I won't get back to that quality time until I can play whatever I just heard.

Did merging your love for blues and guitar come naturally?
I remember walking through my neighborhood one summer in Bedstuy [*Bedford–Stuyvesant, Brooklyn*] and seeing an older man on his stoop playing the blues. I just wanted to play guitar; I didn't care what style; I knew I wanted to be good. He told me to come over every day that summer after he got off work, and he could teach me all he knew. Given that my guitar playing was rooted in the blues, no matter what bands I was playing with or my other musical interests, it all came back to the blues.

How do you view blues music in the modern era?
There's an undeniable marketing tactic to take it to the mainstream. Jack White and John Mayer are playing the blues; they just aren't calling it the blues. I do, however, feel like the blues community has its part to play in the case of whether it will be "big enough" or not. In all the blues festivals I've attended and played, most of the acts, albeit great, sounded the same.

Is the idea that the blues need to be "kept alive" false?
I went to Memphis years ago to see the Blues Challenge. Although I found all the talent amazing, whether it was their musicianship, performance or something else, all the acts the judges wanted to advance sounded alike. The lack of open-mindedness in the blues world can and will hold it back. There's the blues world tagline, "Keeping the blues alive." But most stakeholders in the blues world are killing it instead of keeping it alive. There is no life without evolution, and most other forms of roots music you can name have evolved. But things are incredibly antiquated, and many stakeholders aren't doing their part to bring the genre forward.

Your record, *Strung Out on Thrills*, just came out in February. Tell me about it.
I don't sit down and write a record; I have songs from as far back as 2012 that have yet to be released. I'm more than a guitarist; I am a songwriter, and I have many songs in my catalog that still need to be recorded. I will write 30 to 40 songs a month, and although only five of the 40 may be good, some of the remaining tracks can be worked with, so I'm constantly working.

"Most stakeholders in the blues world are killing it instead of keeping it alive"

So the record is a combination of unreleased and new material?
Yes. But it's funny; the caveat to my new writing is that I sometimes have writer's block, where I go six months without writing a thing. So, *Strung Out on Thrills* stemmed from my older and newer songs, and they could make one good cohesive piece of artwork.

Did the disjointed nature of that prove to be a challenge when tracking guitars?
All the tracks were challenging. It took me 10 months to record this album. I spent two months tracking because of the studio's schedule, and then when the engineer exported the files, they were all corrupt. He was no longer working for the studio, and they couldn't find any files, so I had to start from scratch. When starting from scratch, I began filming a movie at the same time, so I only had a little time to record.

Do you have a specific process when it comes to writing riffs?
Riffs are my favorite. Most of the songs in my catalog are riff heavy. I would say that on this album, "Strung Out on Thrills" is my favorite riff. It's simple but impactful, and that's what I go for. I like the idea of

less being more. My riffs are like my babies. I have a library of riffs, and I always try to make them better than the one before.

How about solos? Do you have a favorite from *Strung Out on Thrills*?
My favorite solo is Laurence Henderson's on "Visceral." He is a friend of mine based in the U.K., and I initially just wanted him to do the fills as I had already laid down a solo, but when he sent me the files back, he had played over the whole song, and I was like, "Holy shit!" We ended up scrapping my solo and keeping his. But overall, I don't write solos beforehand. I improvise all of them.

What does your rig look like these days?
I have had a lot of gear over the years, but I'm a Strat guy through and through. I have a bunch of Fender Mod Shop Strats, but my main one is Daphne Blue with a maple modern C neck, oversized headstock and a rosewood fingerboard. I have used the same amp, a [*Fender*] Twin Reverb, for years. And I've been using Fender Hammertone pedals; I'm loyal to Fender, and they've never let me down.

What are your goals, and how will you achieve them?
In the short and long term, I'd like to remain an ambassador for the blues. I'm working on two new films that I hope shed more light on the blues, and I'm working to bring the first blues festival to Claverack, New York, in 2025. It's all been taxing, but I have a strong team to support and accomplish it.

[*from left*] **Ryan Cook, Ace Frehley and Jeremy Asbrock do their thing in Cedar Park, Texas, July 13, 2023**

GARY MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Rock City Machine Co.

RYAN COOK AND JEREMY ASBROCK HAVE LEARNED PLENTY FROM ACE FREHLEY AND GENE SIMMONS. WITH THEIR NEW DEBUT RECORD, THEY'RE FINALLY PUTTING IT ALL TO GOOD USE

By Andrew Daly

SOME ROCK STORIES are grand; others are a grind. And Ryan Cook and Jeremy Asbrock — who, after roving as session musicians, caught a break with Gene Simmons before connecting with Ace Frehley — have experienced both.

On Simmons' and Frehley's influence, Cook says, "It's omnipresent. Through them, I learned about song structure; I've always been aware that a song needs to grab you, but it takes more than a good riff to keep you there."

Asbrock, a fellow Kiss Army member, agrees, saying, "I started playing guitar because of Kiss, so it's in my DNA. There are nuances — some I wasn't aware of until I played with Gene — that found their way into my riffs."

Kiss fans know that the band's greatest strength is making sure the guitars, while simple, have different textures while retaining what Paul Stanley refers to as the sound of "one big guitar." Judging by Cook and Asbrock's new eight-song record, *Rock City Machine Co.,* they agree with the Kiss formula.

"We try to ensure there aren't two guitars playing the same thing," Asbrock says. "Ace is very good at creating a song within a song when it comes to solos, and I've always thought along those lines."

Sure, Kiss is a considerable influence, and yes, Cook and Asbrock remain members of Frehley's band, but Frehley isn't getting any younger, meaning it was time to stand alone. "It felt like the time," Cook says. "People back home in Nashville kept asking. I think the universe was trying to force us into it. We might have regretted it if we didn't at least give it a stab — and the results have exceeded our expectations."

Songs like "Soul for the Gold" and "The Last Time" show plenty of potential, and the response from the faithful backs that up. As for what's next, Cook says, "My outlook is glass half full — and silver linings. The industry is a challenge, but I'm seeing this through. A positive mindset and great music will take this record to the masses. Bring it on!"

> **"Ace Frehley is very good at creating a song within a song when it comes to solos, and I've always thought along those lines"**

As for Asbrock, he agrees with his longtime friend, saying, "People will love the songs if they hear them. They don't sound like they are copping a vibe off any band; they sound like songs you've heard your whole life without being a rip-off. The tunes are fun and give off a fun vibe; opportunities will present themselves, much like the creation of the band and record."

MY PEDALBOARD

ISAIAH MITCHELL

WHAT THE FORMER BLACK CROWES AND LONGTIME EARTHLESS SIX-STRINGER SEES WHEN HE LOOKS DOWN

Interview by Andrew Daly

"I NEED A simple but effective combination of pedals to get a spaced-out, psychedelic wall of sonic textures. I'm forever searching for sounds I grew up hearing, and the pedals I've collected pretty much take me on a trip through all sorts of beautiful spaceship sounds. But I also need my pedals to be warm and usable, meaning I'm forever searching for the perfect combination of pedals that give me all I need and have unique characteristics, but aren't too complicated.

"From my guitar, I run into a Korg Pitchblack X [*Chromatic Pedal Tuner*], which leads into an Xotic *[XW-2*] Wah, which I know is weird, but I prefer my wah before my gain stuff. That leads into a Cesar Diaz Texas Ranger [*Treble*] Booster, which goes into an MXR [*Custom Shop*] Hybrid Fuzz. Then there's my Klon KTR [*Professional Overdrive*] that I use as a warm drive and tonal filter for the Hybrid Fuzz; I love stacking treble boosters and drives to create an optional, over-the-top fuzz effect.

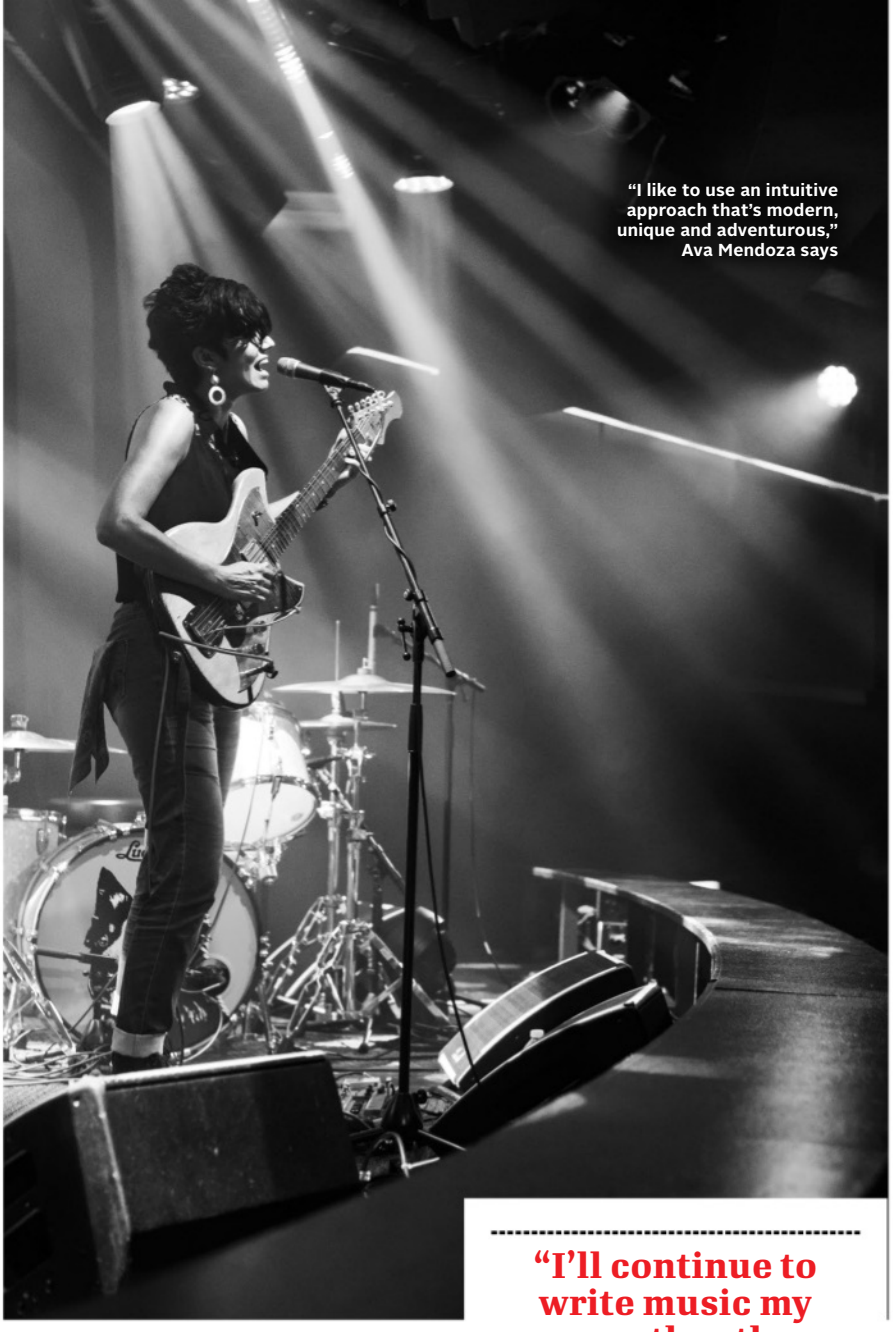
"Next, I've got my Make Sounds Loudly 3 in 1, with one side based on an [*EHX*] Deluxe Memory Man for longer delay and the other off a Tape Echo Emulator for shorter delay length. From there, the chain goes through a Strymon Flint [*V2*] Tremolo & Reverb, which I mainly use for the Harmonic and Sixties Reverb settings."

"I love stacking treble boosters and drives to create an optional, over-the-top fuzz effect"

Isaiah Mitchell on stage with the the Black Crowes in Tempe, Arizona, February 25, 2023

IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ONE PEDAL FOR A FULL SHOW:
"It's hard to pick only one pedal for an Earthless show, but If I had to, it'd be the Cesar Diaz Texas Ranger Treble Booster all the way. It's such a great pedal, and I've loved it since I got it."

COURTESY OF ISAIAH MITCHELL (BOARD) JOHN MEDINA/GETTY IMAGES (MITCHELL)



"I like to use an intuitive approach that's modern, unique and adventurous," Ava Mendoza says

PROVIDED/PR

Ava Mendoza

THE WEST-COAST JAZZ SUPREMO DETAILS HER FAR-FROM-TRADITIONAL APPROACH ON NEW RELEASE *ECHOLOCATION*

By Andrew Daly

AS A 40-YEAR-OLD mainstay of the New York City jazz scene, Ava Mendoza has been around the block a time or three. But that doesn't mean she lacks passion. "Music is my religion," she says, "It's important to me to be around people who are devoted to it."

But Mendoza isn't only a disciple of jazz. Hell, she doesn't even consider herself a true "jazz musician." Growing up in Southern California, she was exposed to everything from Latin American to classical music before latching onto off-kilter alternative sounds, including Black Flag and Sonic Youth.

With influences taken from so many genres, it's fair to wonder what's kept Mendoza interested enough in jazz to release her latest creation, *Echolocation*, with the help of bassist Devin Hoff under the moniker Mendoza Hoff Revels. "Devin and I met in Oakland," she says. "We've had one foot in punk and one in jazz. So we talked about this imaginary four-piece, formed it, and started writing music. It progressed from there."

The duo's punk-meets-jazz roots are smeared all over *Echolocation's* eight tracks, but Mendoza's fretwork carries the load. "I love alternative tunings," she says. "I love interesting chord voicings and finding ways to use open strings for resonance. I like to use an intuitive approach that's modern, unique and adventurous. The truth is that guitar-less jazz — with horns — inspires me more these days. That affects how I use pedals for timbral changes on guitar; it's like a horn where your breath affects the tone. But ultimately, melody has to be present."

Tracks like "Interwhining" and "Echolocation" show an approach that finds Mendoza's guitar carrying the melody while sharing harmony lines with funky free-jazz sax. It's an example of Mendoza's intentional deviation from all things considered "normal' in jazz, a realm she feels funny taking up space in. "I call my music 'jazz' for lack of a better word," she says. "It has always been tricky for me to define myself.

"What I do is different," she adds. "I don't play standards. I respect traditional jazz, but it's not my path. I've always wanted to use all my guitar's sonic possibilities. So I'll continue to write music my way rather than focus on whatever is considered 'traditional.'"

"I'll continue to write music my way rather than focus on whatever is considered 'traditional'"

GUITAR WORLD

COVER MODELS

guitarist: Joe Perry

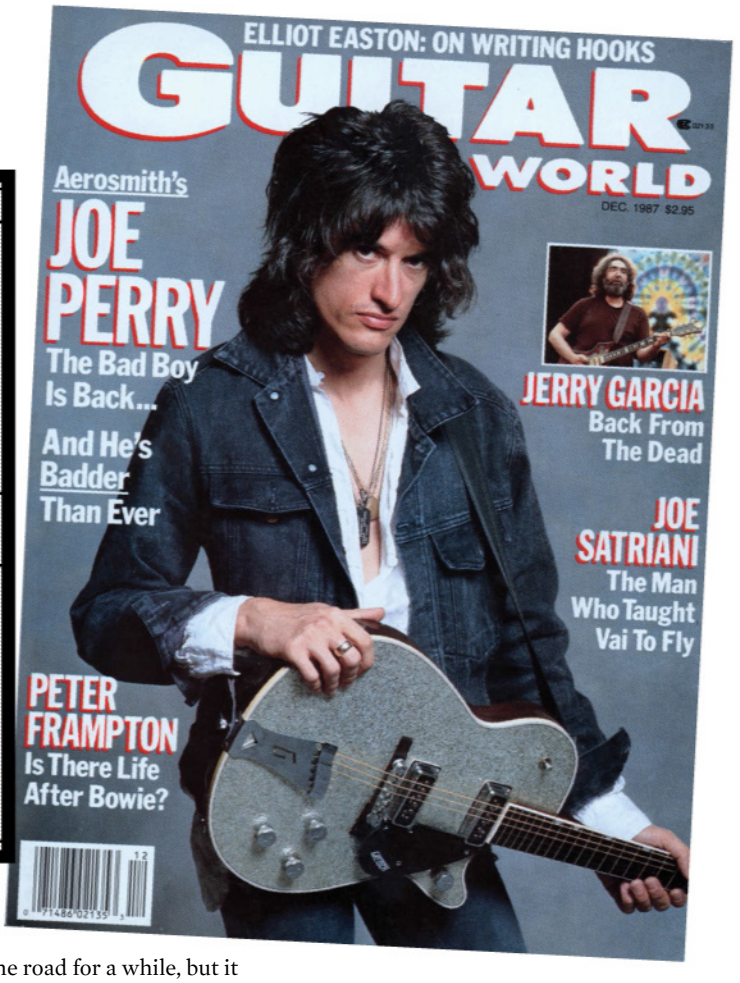
guitar: 1957 Gretsch 6128 Duo Jet

Guitar World catches up with its classic cover stars — and the guitarists who play them.

this interview: January 2024

cover photographer: Glen La Ferman

GW COVER DATE DECEMBER 1987



Q: Where and when did you buy this guitar?

I can't remember exactly. I got it somewhere in California. It's funny — when you're on the road, you go to all the music stores and find stuff, you know? And guys come to the shows, and they'll have two or three guitars under their arms.

Q: Did someone recommend the Duo Jet to you?

Rick Nielsen from Cheap Trick was the king of guys who came to the shows with vintage guitars. Rick would come into my dressing room with a guitar and say, "Joe, you really should buy this one." I wasn't into collecting back then, but he'd come across stuff and say, "Joe, you really should grab one too." I've gotten a couple guitars that way, and the Gretsch might have been a case of that. But jeez, I wish I could remember where I got it.

Q: It's the same Gretsch you used while recording "Dude (Looks Like a Lady)," correct?

Yeah, it's the guitar I used for that one. I liked the bite it gave me for the solo, and I don't know why, but the Gretsch fit that song. I used .10s, and I liked the biting tone I got. It just worked.

Q: Did you take the Duo Jet on the road after that?

I had to. It just had that sound, man. I brought it on the road for a while, but it started to get beat. And by then, Gretsch was reissuing the Duo Jet guitars, so I got another one, though it had a kinda different sound. But it fit the bill and looked the part. I don't know, but that particular Silver Jet has such a special sound.

Q: You're often associated with Les Pauls and Strats. Did the Duo Jet bring something else out in you?

It comes down to amps. I remember recording "Fever" from *Get a Grip* with this old Gibson Firebird from the Sixties with the three pickups. I talked to Brad [*Whitford*] and said, "I'm having trouble getting the most out of this guitar." Brad said, "It would help if you bought good amps." That turned me onto vintage amps, and I started buying them as I'd just been going with whatever worked before then. With the Gretsch, I don't know... I loved how it sounded, but a great amp makes all the difference.

Q: Why'd you choose that guitar for your *GW* cover shoot?

I just really liked it and was playing it often. I loved the sound and look of it. But it's funny because I used it on that album [*1987's* Permanent Vacation], and I'd been playing it live a lot around then, and then, a couple months later, George Harrison showed up on the cover of magazines with one, too [*Harrison's Duo Jet is also featured on the cover of his 1987 album,* Cloud Nine].

"Rick Nielsen would come into my dressing room with a guitar and say, 'Joe, you really should buy this one"

Q: Do you still have the guitar?

Oh, yeah. I still have the Silver Jet. I took it off the road because it was getting beat, but now I'm bringing it on the road again with the Hollywood Vampires and Aerosmith. I decided to bring everything — all the stuff I've been saving — out on the road. If any of it gets beat, whatever.

So what you see me playing, unless it's obviously a new guitar, it's probably the real thing.

— Andrew Daly

Some very trivial trivia: *The cover photo of Joe Perry was shot in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.*

* If you'd like to nominate a particular *Guitar World* cover for the COVER MODELS page, let us know. Please be as specific (with the issue date/cover star) as you can.

FUTURE (ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHER: GLEN LA FERMAN)

I DON'T WANT TO SPOIL THE PARTY

"I thought, 'Oh, God, this could go really bad.' You know — John Lennon called me to play on his record, and he is who he is, and I'm telling him that I can't remember playing with him on [*David Bowie's 'Fame'*]. But he thought it was hysterical. It became kind of a joke during the recordings"

JOHN KISCH ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

EARL SLICK

The venerable session ace recounts fast times with John Lennon and David Bowie — and exactly why he turned down David Coverdale's Whitesnake offer

By Joe Bosso

THROUGHOUT THE 1970S and into the Eighties, Earl Slick was living most rock 'n' roll guitarists' dreams. He'd logged several worldwide tours with David Bowie and played a vital musical role on albums such as *Young Americans* and *Station to Station*. As if working with one British rock legend weren't enough, in 1980 Slick was chosen by John Lennon to play guitar on the former Beatle's first album in five years, *Double Fantasy*.

"That's just the tip of the iceberg," Slick says. "I was really, really busy back then. There are days now when I astonish myself going, 'Christ, did I really do all that?' I'll go on Wikipedia and be like, 'Oh, there's this and that.' Or somebody will call and say, 'I was just on Spotify and you're on this record.' I'll say, 'Now that you mention it, I am. I forgot about that one.'"

By the mid-Eighties, however, the high-profile gigs weren't coming like they used to. Slick attempted a career reboot with ex-Stray Cats members Slim Jim Phantom and Lee Rocker in Phantom, Rocker & Slick, but their union lasted for only two albums. After kicking a debilitating drug and alcohol dependency, he joined the L.A..-based glam-metal band Dirty White Boy, who went belly-up after one album. A short stint with another L.A. outfit, Little Caesar, yielded similar results. Finally, in 1992, fed up with beating his head against the wall, Slick decided to chuck it all and headed to Lake Tahoe. For the next four years, he pursued a "normal job" selling timeshares.

"Only problem was, I sucked at it," he says with a laugh. "I was no good at it at all. It was a strange time — I was adjusting to being sober, and I was filled with anxiety and discouragement from being jerked around by record companies. I just thought, 'I need a drastic change.' So I went somewhere I could be anonymous and get away from it all."

In an unlikely turn, Slick was tempted to ditch retirement by a Tahoe neighbor, Whitesnake singer David Coverdale, who floated an offer for the guitarist to join the veteran hard rock band. "I gave it some serious thought, but I finally had to say no," Slick says, "I realized I would have been faking my way through it, and it would have backfired on both of us." More to the guitarist's liking was a six-month writing collaboration with Coverdale that resulted in the singer's third solo record, 2000's *Into the Light*.

After recording the album, Slick still wasn't convinced that he was ready to return to music full time. That all changed in 1999, when he received a vague and bewildering email indicating that somebody was looking for him. Some amateur sleuthing revealed that the somebody was none other than David Bowie. "I contacted David, and before you knew it I was back in," Slick says.

Over the next 14 years, Slick played with Bowie on *Heathen* (2002), *Reality* (2003) and *The Next Day* (2013) and toured with the singer until 2004 (after suffering a mild heart attack on stage in Prague, Czech Republic, during the Reality Tour, Bowie was

"I GAVE WHITESNAKE SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT, BUT I FINALLY HAD TO SAY NO...

forced to cancel his remaining dates and never resumed full-time performing). Meanwhile, the guitarist released solid solo albums (2002's *Slick Trax*, 2003's *Zig Zag* and 2021's *Fist Full of Devils*), toured with the New York Dolls and the Yardbirds, as well as a band called Slinky Vagabond (which included the Sex Pistols' Glen Matlock and Blondie's Clem Burke).

Recently, Slick was reunited with various Bowie alumni (among them pianist Mike Garson, guitarist Mark Plati, bassists Gail Ann Dorsey and Tim Lefebvre) on a new band project, KillerStar, spearheaded by singer Rob Fleming and drummer James Sedge. The group recorded an album's worth of material remotely, and there are plans to perform live.

Thus far, only two tracks have been released — the faintly Bowie-esque "Should've Known Better" blends classic rock and art rock, while "Falling Through" bears traces of prime Pink Floyd — but Slick isn't sure which is which. "I don't know titles, really," he says. "I don't even know half of the Bowie titles I'm on except the hits. But I had fun doing the KillerStar stuff. It seemed like a good opportunity, and it turned out well. Technology is amazing; I can do all this recording without leaving home."

I'm going to jump around a bit, but I wanted to start by asking you about Mark Plati. You two worked on some of David Bowie's early 2000s records, and he produced your album *Zig Zag*. How do you two bond guitar-wise?
We get on great. He's a terrific guitar partner, but then he does everything. He's a motherfucker of a rhythm player. He doesn't just get the parts down — he gets the feel. Whenever we played together as a guitar team, if he was playing rhythm, I didn't have to think about anything. It was great.

Mike Garson is also on the KillerStar album with you. What do you remember about playing with Mike on *Young Americans*?
My recollections are vague. Out of all the stuff I did with David, I have a memory block about *Young Americans*, which doesn't make sense because we were far more fucked up when we did *Station to Station*. On that record, we went in and we stayed there until we finished everything. With *Young Americans*, we did maybe a week of sessions and then we were back on the road. It wasn't one continuous job, per se.

Even with your vague memories of *Young Americans*, can you speak to the differences in working with producer Tony Visconti on that record versus Bowie's later albums?
I might as well just stick my foot in my mouth. One thing about artists like David Bowie — there's a producer there, but when we worked on parts and stuff, all of that was David. Tony was there and he kept things organized, but the creative ideas, when it came to me, that was David. It was the same way with [*producer*] Harry Maslin and *Station to Station*; it came down to David. Most of it was the two of us working my shit out. Like on *The Next Day*, my favorite track is "Valentine's Day."

Beautiful song.
David played that for me in the control room on an acoustic the day we were going to cut it. As soon as I heard it, I said to him, "The Kinks," and he went, "Great." If you notice, the rhythm guitars on that song are very "Waterloo Sunset."

That song has a memorable riff and a striking solo.
Yeah, well, after I said "Kinks," I started to noodle around on some rhythmic things, and David said, "We need an opening riff and some other riffs." He would play a couple of notes, and I'd get an idea and develop it. Then I'd wait to see the smile on his face, and I'd think, "OK, now we got it." It never really took a lot of time.

You mentioned *Station to Station*; that title track is so revolutionary, and your end solo is way out-there in terms of experimentation. Do you ever listen to it and go, "What the hell were we doing?"
[*Laughs*] I mean, on the occasion when I hear something on the radio or I might play a few tracks, part of me is going, "Christ Almighty, we really did pull off some cool stuff together, and it was timely." In hindsight, it doesn't sound that outside the box, but at the time we did it, I guess it was.

Earl Slick in New York City in 1983. "I was really, really busy back then," he says

Do you remember which guitars you used on it?
On "Station," I used a Strat on some of the rhythm parts; actually, on the first half, where it's a little dirge-y. Then when it goes uptempo, I'm using my black Les Paul on the rhythm and also on that solo.

What about on "Stay"? That's another gem on *Station to Station*.
The rhythm is the Les Paul, and the solo is the Strat.

Both of those songs are so free-form; they feel like one-take keepers.
"Stay" was pretty much a one taker. On "Station," we sat down with a couple of guitars, and we wanted it to have a little bit more structure to it, a little bit more of a melodic thing, which "Stay" wasn't — that was just going to be a bluesy kind of free-form solo. But on "Station," we wanted something different, so we were just sitting there with a few guitars and coming up with different licks for each little bit.

Back to *Young Americans* for a second, was that your first contact with John Lennon?
It was, but I can't remember it.

Because you were high at the time?
Well, yes, I was. This is so strange because John is my favorite Beatle.

No memory at all of working with him on "Fame"?
No, I can't remember... So fast-forward to 1980. I was uncharacteristically nervous before *Double Fantasy* started. I went in early on the first day. I thought if I could grab a cup of coffee and a smoke and just chill out... I got to the studio and nobody was there — except for John. I introduced myself, and his reaction was, "Why?" Because to him, we already knew each other. And I said, "Well... I don't remember." The second I said it, I thought, "Oh, God, this

I WOULD HAVE BEEN FAKING MY WAY THROUGH IT, AND IT WOULD HAVE BACKFIRED"

could go really bad." You know — he called me to play on his record, and he is who he is, and I'm telling him that I can't remember playing with him on a Number 1 record. But he thought it was hysterical. It became kind of a joke during the recordings.

Do you recall which guitars you used on *Double Fantasy*?
I used my '65 SG Junior a lot. I had a black early '70s Les Paul Special. Those were the two main ones. There was a Strat on a few of those things, as well as my '68 Gibson J-45.

Did John have firm thoughts on guitar sounds or parts? Would he direct you at all?
None of that came up at first. John didn't lay out anything like, "OK, guys, maybe you should go for this sound or that sound." We would learn the songs — me, John and the other guitar player, Hugh McCracken — and as we went, John would say, "Slick, why don't you go a little dirtier?" Then he'd say to Huey, "Why don't you try this?" But that would happen as the tracks were being run down.

This was after a period when John sort of retired for five years. Was he a little rusty on the guitar, or did he have all his skills together?
All of his guitar chops were there. His vocal chops were there. He was right on the money.

As you and Hugh worked things out, did you do any jamming with John?
Absolutely — and it was a gas. Every day John would break into some Fifties or Sixties thing — Eddie Cochran or Buddy Holly. We'd all join in for a while, and then he'd say, "OK, back to work." Once in a while, Hugh and I would start playing a Beatles song, and John would go, "Cut that shit out!" It was really funny.

Which Beatles songs would you play?
There were a few things. One that would really get to him was "She's a Woman," which isn't a Lennon song. It's a McCartney song.

In his last interviews, John said he planned to tour. Did he talk to you about being in the band?
Oh yeah, it was all set. He started to talk about it during the last couple of weeks of recording, and in the final week he went to everybody individually and asked if we wanted to do it. The obvious answer was yes. [*Laughs*] At the time, I had just signed to Columbia, and I was supposed to start a record in February of '81. At that point, John had a plan to do *Double Fantasy* and *Milk and Honey* at the same time, but then the plan changed to put out *Double Fantasy* first, and then we'd finish *Milk and Honey* and go out on tour.

I explained my situation to John, that I had a record deal and all that. He got in touch with my management, and they worked everything out with Columbia, who were actually thrilled I'd be going out with Lennon before my record. Sadly, none of that happened.

Soon after, you were working with Yoko again on *Season of Glass* with Phil Spector producing.
Yeah, for the first two weeks. Thank God she got rid of him. It was a nightmare. I mean, he was crazy.

I'll do my best deadpan: No, really?
Yeah. [*Laughs*] It was the same band from *Double Fantasy*, but [*producer*] Jack Douglas wasn't there. When Yoko said Phil was doing the record, I thought, "I've worked with a lot of the best producers, and it will be great to work with Phil Spector." Well, my tune changed within the first 24 hours of being in a studio with him. He was a fucking nut.

Did he bring guns to the studio?
Oh yeah. He had a bodyguard the size of the Empire State Building with him, and he was carrying one of those long barrel Clint Eastwood .44 Magnums in a shoulder holster. I'm going, "Dude, this woman's husband was just killed, and you're walking around with a gun." The sessions were torturous. I got in the elevator one day with Yoko, and I said, "What time is Phil coming in?" She goes, "He's not going to be here today." I asked when he was coming back, and she said, "He's not." That was the entire conversation.

Moving forward, after a while apart, you were pulled back into Bowie's orbit. Was there a pattern in how and when he called you for various albums and tours?
I had to learn how David's mind works. Whatever hit him at a particular time, that's what he did. I had to go with the flow. I remember I played with him in 2000 — we did Glastonbury and a gig at the BBC Theatre. There were some gigs in

KMAZUR/WIREIMAGE

Earl Slick [*left*] and David Bowie at a Reality tour warmup show in Poughkeepsie, New York, 2003

"IT WAS A GAS... ONCE IN A WHILE, HUGH AND I WOULD START PLAYING A BEATLES SONG,

Earl Slick in action with the New York Dolls in London, 2011

© BRANDON/REDFERNS

New York. A while later, he was talking about touring on the Heathen record. So this is weird — I got a call from Mark Plati, and he said, "Before you hear this from somebody else, it looks like David's got another guitar player, so you won't be going on the tour." I just went, "Well, another day with David."

I was in New York for the week, so I emailed David and asked if he wanted to have coffee. We were supposed to meet, but then his assistant called and said he wasn't feeling well, and then she asked me to lunch. I went to meet her, and then we went to Looking Glass Studios, where David was doing some vocals. He wasn't well; he had a cold or the flu. I said hi and was there for a bit, and finally he said, "By the way, what are you doing in April?" I just laughed and said, "Why, what's going on?" He said, "We're going out." I said, "Great." That's just the way it went.

You're on a couple of other songs on *The Next Day* — "Dirty Boys" and "(You Will) Set the World on Fire." How did David arrive at which songs he wanted you to play on?

On that album, unbeknownst to me, David had been in the studio on and off for a year. I was in touch with the guys playing on it, but nobody could say a word because they signed NDAs. So I'm in Montclair, New Jersey, doing a blues gig. I was with a surgeon friend and he had a Cobra car. He said, "Hey, let's drive the Cobra to the gig." Sounded good to me... On the way there, the engine caught fire and the car blew up.

Nice.

We're in this high-end neighborhood, and there's this car in the middle of the street engulfed in flames. The police and news people came down. Somebody spotted me, and it hit the internet. David saw this and he sent me an email — "Are you OK?" I wrote him back and said I was fine. A couple hours later, I got another email — "So how have you been?" "Good, how are you doing?" We started doing these weird emails throughout the day, and finally I said, "Are you going somewhere with this?" He goes, "I'm in the studio making a record, and you need to play on it." When I got to the studio, I said to him, "Did I have to blow up a fucking car?" [*Laughs*] You can't make this shit up.

Were you surprised when he didn't call you for *Blackstar*?

No. The thing with *Blackstar* was, none of us knew he was ill. We knew he was ill when the announcement came that he was dead. I spoke to him on the phone the October before he died. I had to ask him some questions because I was doing that *Station to Station* tour in the U.K. and Japan with Bernard Fowler. We had a conversation, but he didn't mention *Blackstar*. None of us from the band are on that record, and I can see why. It's a different kettle of fish from what we would've done; it's kind of an odd jazz thing going on. With David, people were always coming in and out.

Another guitarist David worked with quite extensively was Reeves Gabrels. You two never played together with David, though, right?

Not with David, but Reeves did work on my last solo record. We met around 2010 or so, and we discovered we had more than David in common. When I was just starting out, my bands would play in Staten Island, and Reeves would come to watch me. I had no idea about that until we met.

You two have jammed together?

Oh, yeah. A while ago, I was in England working with Glen Matlock, and Reeves was around. We had him come in and sit in with us. As weird as he can play, he can play anything. He's fantastic.

You turned down joining Whitesnake because you knew it wouldn't be a good fit, but have you ever accepted a gig and regretted it?

There has been that. There have been times when things were slow, and something would come up and I'd do it. But I try to suss that out beforehand so I don't wind up in something that doesn't work.

What kinds of guitars are you playing these days? I assume it's a lot of your signature models...

Slick Guitars — we've got a new batch coming soon. We had one last year [*the SL56*] with f-holes. It's really lightweight. The pickups kick ass. They're made by GFS, but they're Slick brand pickups. The Tele-style pickups are like old-school Tele models. I play Nash guitars a lot, and I've been playing Teles again. I'm back to Fender amps. For the last 10 years, I've been playing Teles. A few years ago I went out and used Supros. Then when I got home, I plugged into a Bassman and a Marshall Plexi, and I went, "A Telecaster with these amps — that's the shit." GW

AND JOHN WOULD GO, 'CUT THAT SHIT OUT!' IT WAS REALLY FUNNY"

MACHINERY MAKING MODERN MUSIC...

RUSH LEGEND **ALEX LIFESON** PROVIDES *GW* WITH A DEEP DIVE INTO HIS NEW LINE OF SIGNATURE **LERXST GEAR** – AMPS, PEDALS AND THAT NEW **LIMELIGHT GUITAR**

STORY BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK
PHOTOS BY RICHARD SIBBALD

IF, SOMEWHERE OUT in the cosmos, there exists a master list of guitarists with the most coveted tones in rock history, it's safe to say that Rush's Alex Lifeson ranks near the top. His sound — crisp and articulate, and characterized by lightly chorused arpeggios, shimmering, glassy chords and smoothly overdriven lead lines — has powered some of the greatest radio anthems of the last half-century and is instantly recognizable to generations of listeners.

Lifeson has, unsurprisingly, collaborated with various manufacturers on signature pieces of gear over the years — but never to the extent that he is at this moment in time. Though Rush ceased activity in 2015 (and, with the tragic passing of drummer Neil Peart in 2020, are unlikely to restart in the future) the guitarist, now 70, is still deeply engaged in his tone journey. To that end, he recently unveiled a newly designed line of high-end amplifiers under the brand name Lerxst (Lifeson's longtime nickname), conceived and constructed in partnership with celebrated North Carolina-based manufacturer Mojotone. The flagship design, the Omega, is based on a custom model Mojotone built for Lifeson during the run for Rush's final studio album, 2012's *Clockwork Angels*. The new Omega, a British-voiced head with footswitch-able clean and lead channels, a shared three-band EQ, a switchable 50/25-watt power section and a high-quality serial effects loop, homes in on some of the key aspects of Lifeson's sound and brings them to the public in a handsome (dig the "Starman" power indicator light on the front panel, for one eye-catching feature), hand-built package. "It's a great amp," Lifeson tells *Guitar World*, "and I just thought, now's the time to share it."

Lifeson is apparently in a very sharing mood these days. In addition to the Omega (also offered in a special-edition hand-wired version), the Lerxst range includes the Chi amplifier, a more compact 30-watt design available in small-box head and 1x12 combo formats, as well as a variety of 1x12, 2x12 and 4x12 speaker cabinets. There's also a Lerxst pedal, the By-Tor Signature Overdrive, which squeezes the sound and presence of the Omega into an even smaller enclosure — this one a 'board-friendly (note the top-mounted jacks) stompbox with discrete boost and drive sections that can be engaged separately or in tandem.

Alex Lifeson with the Lerxst Omega head (and cabinet) and the Lerxst Limelight guitar with Vega trem [*left*] and Floyd Rose

LERXST LUTHIER!

A quick guide to the Lerxst Limelight's specs

Body: Swamp Ash
Bridge: Vega Trem (052578) or Original Floyd Rose (made in Germany 052585)
Pickups: 1x Mojotone Lerxst Humbucker and 2x Mojotone Lerxst Single Coils
Color: Cream
Controls: 1x Tone, 1x Volume, 3-way toggle Switch
Neck Wood: Maple
Scale Length: 25.5" (647.7 mm)
Fingerboard: Ebony
Fingerboard Radius: 12" (304.8 mm)
Finish: High Gloss
Frets: Medium Stainless Steel
Number of Frets: 22
Machine Head Ratio: 18:1 staggered locking keys (*on Vega Trem model only)
Nut Type: Graphtech (*on Vega trem model only)
Made in: Canada
MAP: $3,999

But that's not all. Not long after announcing the joint venture with Mojotone, Lifeson unveiled one more collaboration: the Lerxst Limelight guitar, designed in conjunction with Canadian builder Godin. The first entry in a proposed line of six-strings, the model draws inspiration from one of Lifeson's most iconic and idiosyncratic instruments — the heavily modded guitar known as the Hentor Sportscaster, which Lifeson first used on Rush's smash 1981 album *Moving Pictures* (it's featured on the solo for "Limelight," among other tracks), and employed significantly on the follow-ups, *Signals* and *Grace Under Pressure*. The Hentor began life as a Seventies-era Fender Stratocaster, which Lifeson modified to meet his specific tonal and playability needs, eventually adding a Bill Lawrence L500 humbucker in the bridge position to access heavier sounds, a more comfortable aftermarket neck from a Canadian company named Shark, a Floyd Rose tremolo and a Gibson-style three-way toggle selector on the lower horn, among other features. The new Limelight guitar pays tribute to the Hentor with an S-type swamp ash body, customized maple neck, Lerxst Limelight pickups in an HSS configuration, a three-way toggle switch, the option of either a Vega or Floyd Rose tremolo and more.

"I was a little apprehensive that it wouldn't come out the way I expected," Lifeson says of attempting to capture the magic of such a unique instrument. "But they nailed it."

He laughs. "I mean, I'm biased, but it's really great."

Lifeson recently sat down with *Guitar World* to discuss his deep dive into signature gear. But he also assured us that he still enjoys making music with that gear as well. "I'm writing and recording all the time, I'm working on a lot of different acts, I'm very, very happy being at home and working on that stuff," he says. As for whether any of the "stuff" he's working on might one day include Rush bassist and singer Geddy Lee? "We talk about it," Lifeson acknowledges. "But he's got a busy life. I'm doing things. So we'll see how it goes over the next little while."

Until then, there's plenty of new guitars, amps and pedals to attend to. "Oh, there's lots of different things going on," Lifeson says. "It's all been in the works for a couple of years, and now it's finally arrived. And it's so fun to get to this point."

What led you to begin working with Mojotone on the Omega roughly a decade ago?

"The Limelight is basically a reissue of the Hentor Sportscaster, with a humbucker similar to the Bill Lawrence pickup in the original," Lifeson says

[*right*] The Lerxst By-Tor Signature Overdrive

The inspiration for it was a Marshall Silver Jubilee that I used on *Clockwork Angels*. After that, I couldn't find another one. I had leads on a few, but every time I approached someone they didn't want to sell it. So I spoke to Michael McWhorter at Mojotone about actually building an amp based on that platform, but then changing the bias, warming it up a little bit and making some other adjustments to my taste. The Omega has been in production ever since, but as a sort of limited boutique amp. More recently, we felt it made sense to update it. So now we've got a great amp with different configurations and colors, and we have the Chi, which is the smaller, lower-watt version, and we have the cabinets. We started to look at a number of things — the amps, the pedals, the guitar line, the whole guitar-oriented package — to see what we could do.

What are some of the particular features of the Omega that make it ideal for your tonal needs?
I really wanted a strong clean section, which the Omega has. My experience with a lot of multi-channel amps is the clean sound never quite had the body that I heard in my head. But I think we got it with this amp. And then the more overdriven section is not *too* overdriven. It's not crazy overdriven, which has never been my thing. The way I've approached it has always been to pull the volume back on my guitar for rhythm parts and then turn it up for solos — more the old-style boost. So I wanted a good, chunky, distorted section, but not too overdriven, and with a nice, smooth boost for soloing.

In the period between developing the original Omega and these new models, did your taste in tone change at all?
I don't think so. I was quite happy when Mojotone delivered those first Omega amps, and I used them onstage for two or three Rush tours. So it fit everything that I wanted for that period of time. With the new ones we haven't made any major changes, although there is also a hand-wired version now, which I actually haven't heard. I should probably check one of those out if I can. [*Laughs*] I think they're all gone already, but I'll get in line.

They might bump you up to the front.
Maybe. I'm not so sure!

Have you also used the Chi?
I have. Actually, I did a gig just before Christmas, the Andy Kim Christmas special, which is a cool event for charity that, for the last few years, they've done at Massey Hall here in Toronto. Typically, I would get their production to supply an amp for me, just for convenience. But this time I took the Chi combo with me, and I loved it. It's a lightweight amp with a nice, tight quality, and it was loud enough for the room, certainly. I like the convenience of that combo, and it does sound really great.

You've also developed a pedal with Mojotone, the By-Tor Signature Overdrive.
We talked about doing a whole line of pedals. And when we were discussing the idea, I said I thought it'd be kind of cool to have a By-Tor pedal. If you go back to that song, "By-Tor and the Snow Dog" [*from 1975's* Fly by Night] the By-Tor pedal has all of those growly characteristics. So it's an overdrive, and it's also a boost. What Michael likes to say is that we really tried to build the Omega into a small little box, so that you get the drive and the quality of the distortion similar to the amp. That was their target with it, and they got it.

Over the years I've tried a bunch of other pedals that do sort of the same thing, but I like this one because it's a little smoother. It's not so aggressive and over the top. When I try out a lot of pedals, I find that they seem to be extreme in whatever it is they're doing. And then you can dial it back, of course. But with the By-Tor, it's just really nice and smooth. I'm being kind of selfish with how I approach it, because I'm thinking about myself first. [*Laughs*] But the tone is great. I've actually used it on some sessions.

Last but certainly not least, you recently unveiled a new signature guitar, the Lerxst Limelight, which is based on your famous Hentor Sportscaster modded Strat from the early Eighties. What was the inspiration behind that guitar?
Well, back then I had a Strat, but I'm more of a Gibson guy. And I've always been a humbucker guy. So I dropped a humbucker into the Strat. And then I really liked those Fender pickups for the cleaner stuff. I wanted the combination of the two. So I made a few of those guitars. This one was the one I used for the solo for "Limelight," on *Moving Pictures*, so we called the new model the Limelight. It's basically a reissue of the Hentor, with a humbucker similar to the Bill Lawrence pickup in the original, the same kind of Floyd Rose, all the same attributes that the original had.

Essentially you were looking to create a superstrat, similar to what Eddie Van Halen was doing at the time, where you're trying to cross a Fender with a Gibson.
Yes. Basically it's the same idea. And with the Floyd Rose, too. So now you've got a consistent vibrato system that stays in tune. And we're going to offer two different versions — one with the [*locking*] Floyd Rose and then one that's just a straight-through. It's not a lockdown. Because not everybody goes crazy with that thing. I actually like to use the arm pretty subtly — more as a vibrato instead of to do big dive bombs and things like that. And sometimes it's a little cumbersome with the locking nut. So we

> "The inspiration for it was a Marshall Silver Jubilee that I used on *Clockwork Angels*. After that, I couldn't find another one"

Lifeson at the Godin factory with Simon Godin

"Whether Ged and I get back together again and write or do anything, we'll see. Until then, there's plenty to work on, you know?"

thought we would just make that an option available to people. But the guitar sounds great, and it's really playable. The neck feels really, really good on it, too. You know, I took all the finish off the neck and made it really personal to what I like, and Godin really did it right.

Over the years you've collaborated with various manufacturers on signature guitars and amplifiers. In the past, artists would generally stay with one company, but nowadays it seems like there's less of an issue with collaborating with multiple brands. Is this something that has ever been a problem for you?

It hasn't been an issue. For the guitar, we approached Godin, a Canadian company, and I liked that. I like to keep stuff at home if I can. They were very enthusiastic, and we spent a lot of time going back and forth on exactly what the design is, if there's any compromises we had to make on the design for considerations of copyright and all of that. They were really into the project and they continue to be. So at the end of the day, it all worked and everybody's fine with it.

For longtime Rush fans, one of the most exciting aspects of all this new gear is the possibility of getting closer to achieving the Alex Lifeson-like tones that they've loved all these years. In your opinion, what is that Alex Lifeson tone?

Wow, that's hard for me to answer. I don't know how people hear my sound or my tone. I strongly believe that if you give a guitar to five different players — same guitar, same amp — each one of them is going to sound different, just because of the way they play. The attack, how their fingers move, all of that. A lot of it is your own personal mojo that goes into your playing. To try and be a little objective. I guess when people think of my tone, they think of clean arpeggios, so that needs to be addressed. And they think of a solid, crunchy sound. I'm not overly heavy, not metal-y in that sense. I like to have definition and clarity in whatever it is I'm doing, whether it's a heavy, dirty sound or it's a clean sound with body. And I want the gear I'm using to respond and speak well to that. Those are maybe the types of things people hear when they listen to my playing.

Speaking of your playing, is there any possibility you might put all this great new gear to work alongside Geddy?

Um... Don't know. [*Laughs*] Really, there's so much stuff in the airwaves these days about Geddy and I getting back together and doing something. And I think it's partly because of the way things went nine years ago, when we finished touring. We were at a high point, and we were playing really well. The show looked great. I think a lot of our fans felt, you know, why now? But we broke up the band basically for Neil. And he had valid reasons. He was tired. He couldn't play at the level he demanded from himself. So he felt it was time. But I think that for a lot of Rush fans there wasn't a feeling of closure. So there's a hope that we'd get back together.

I will say that doing this book tour with Geddy [*for Lee's 2023 memoir,* My Effin' Life], I did a few of the stops with him, and it's kind of reignited interest in us getting out and playing. And the shows that we did last year for Taylor Hawkins [*at the 2022 Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concerts*] were inspiring, too. So for a little while I thought, you know, it'd be kind of good to get back out. And then I thought... nah, not really. [*Laughs*] I mean, we toured for 40 years. I'm not interested in going back out on tour. I don't wanna sit in a hotel room for hours and hours and hours to work for a couple of hours. Been there, done it, loved it. But that's in the past. So whether Ged and I get back together again and write or do anything, we'll see. Until then, there's plenty to work on, you know? GW

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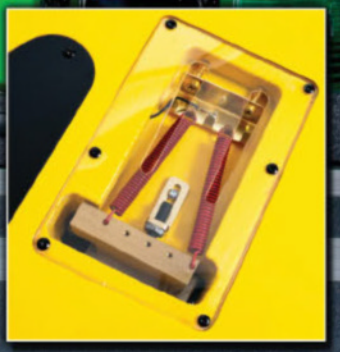

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SPACE INVADERS

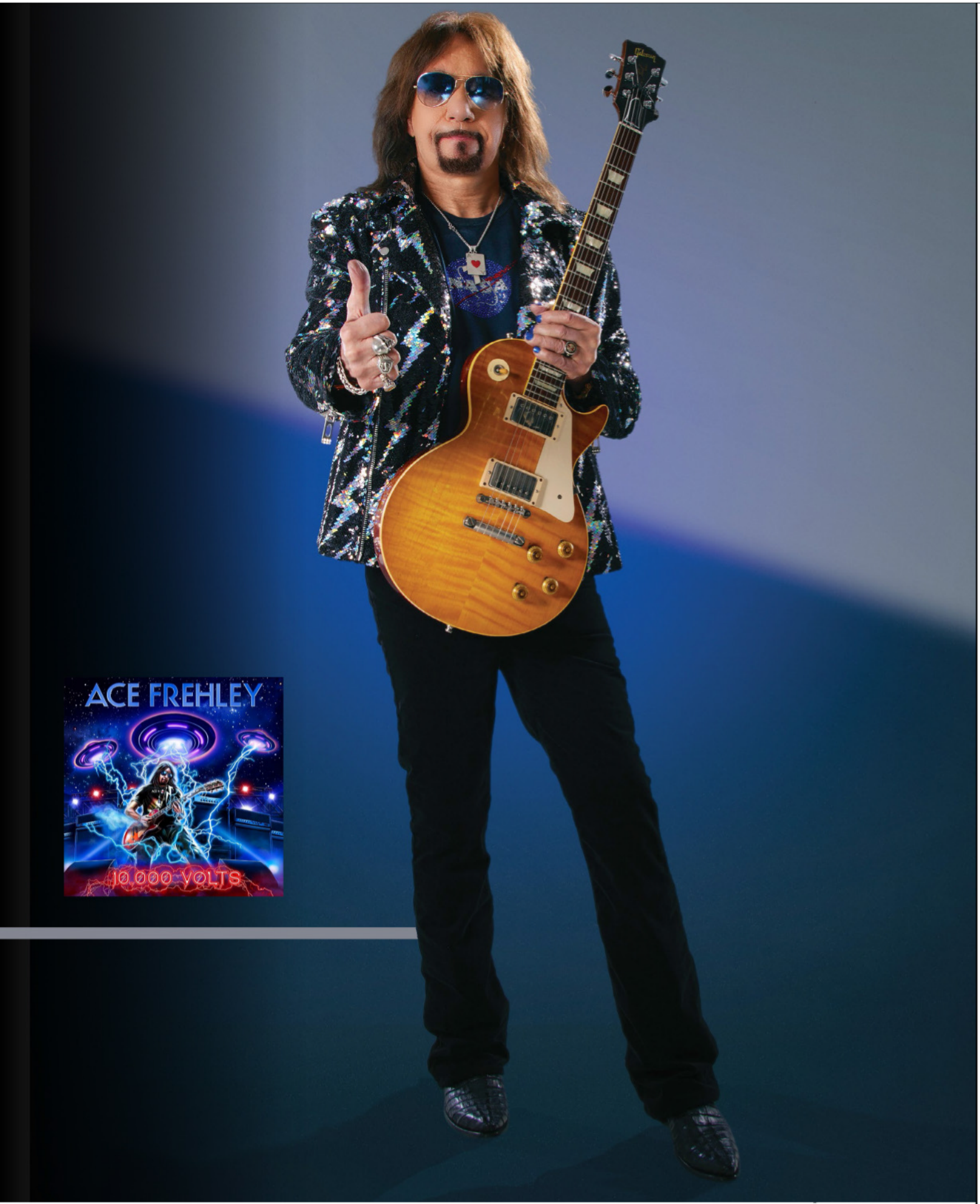
GUITAR WORLD SPENT SOME QUALITY TIME AT **ACE FREHLEY**'S PAD TO SHOOT THE BREEZE, CHECK OUT HIS STUFF AND DISSECT HIS GROOVIN' NEW ALBUM, *10,000 VOLTS*

STORY (AND HOME-VISIT PHOTOS) BY JON WIEDERHORN

IN AN AFFLUENT New Jersey suburb about an hour's drive from Manhattan, a maze of tree-lined side streets creates a grid that keeps out the heavy traffic, leaving a peaceful, bucolic neighborhood lined with spacious homes and lush, manicured lawns undisturbed by the noise. At the end of a short block that resembles most of the other streets is a Colonial-style home that's a bit larger than the surrounding residences.

The biggest clue that there's something different here is the long, curved driveway that runs past rows of privacy trees and seems to disappear. At the end of the driveway there's a parking area big enough for a dozen cars; on the other side is the front of the stately yet inviting home of Ace Frehley.

PHOTO BY JAYME THORNTON


ACE FREHLEY
10,000 VOLTS

The guitar hero and co-founder of Kiss warmly greets *Guitar World* at the door and invites us into the kitchen for a cup of coffee and a brief chat about world events before leading us on a guided tour of the home and basement studio, where he wrote and recorded much of his new album, *10,000 Volts*. When asked why he's living in upper-class suburbia instead of a major rock mecca, Frehley shrugs.

"We got this place for a great price, and I really like it out here," he says, adjusting his large, rounded sunglasses with his blue nail-polished fingers. "People around here are all successful, and they're not really into the whole world of rock 'n' roll. I can go out to dinner and eat in peace without being bothered."

Chez Frehley may not be located in a rock haven, but the inside is designed to appeal to the rock star aesthetic Frehley has followed ever since his dad gave him his first guitar at age 13; Frehley's early obsession with rock 'n' roll — and his fascination with science fiction — led to his entry into Kiss in 1973, and his band character, Space Ace. To wit, old science-fiction movie posters line the walls of his home, and every creature (feature) comfort is present: an antique pool table, a spaceship portal painted on a wall behind a velvety blue couch, even a fan-crafted poster of Ace replacing Jack Nicholson in the famous final scene black-and-white wall photo in *The Shining*.

"IN KISS, WHEN WE PULLED INTO A NEW CITY, INSTEAD OF CHECKING INTO THE HOTEL, **ME AND MY GUITAR TECH WOULD DRIVE AROUND TO THE PAWN SHOPS**. WE GOT SOME GREAT STUFF THAT WAY"

There's also the more cozy, homey stuff, including a giant-screen TV with high-end speakers, a living room with comfy modern furniture and framed pictures of family and friends. Of course, there's no shortage of Kiss and Ace memorabilia, and in a room behind the kitchen is a display of unique guitars Ace loves but doesn't play, including a goldtop Gibson ES-335, a glittery flame-colored Strat and an oddity that Frehley can't identify. It's a brown Telecaster-shaped "NDEA Magnetic" with two P90 pickups and four tone knobs inlaid with marble blue-green stones.

"I've never seen anything like it before," Ace says, "So I had to have it. Maybe one of your readers can tell me what it is."

A little more shop talk follows before Ace heads over to the picture windows overlooking his backyard and points to the spacious jacuzzi, where he relaxes in the spring and summer. Not only is it meditative, but the warm water and pressurized jets help soothe his back and neck, which he injured in multiple car accidents in the Seventies and Eighties. But that was a lifetime ago, when he seemed to be living on borrowed time and was partying so hard he could no longer function in the band he helped form.

Now, 17 years clean and sober, Ace is in fine shape, making new music, touring with his band — featuring guitarist Jeremy Asbrock, bassist Ryan Cook and drummer Scott Coogan — and recording cover albums of his favorite old songs. Inspired, creatively motivated and energized, he enjoys spending his leisure time with his fiancée Lara Cove, playing with his giant poodle Chewie and taking frequent trips to Las Vegas to gamble. Despite the decades of aches and pains, Ace gets around pretty well for a guy who'll turn 73 on April 27. And he's convinced he's got many years of songwriting and recording ahead of him.

"I've got really good genes in my family," he says. "My aunt was 99 when she died. My dad lived to be 96 and my mother lived to be 86. She would've lived a lot longer if my father didn't pass away; she died of a broken heart not long after. It was Super Bowl weekend. I spent a couple days with her in the hospital and I said to her, 'It's okay, you can let go now. You can go up to heaven and be with Pop.' She died 12 hours later."

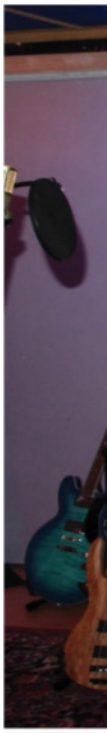
While he's convinced he has many productive years left to rock the house, he doesn't want to settle into old age without kicking, screaming and ripping on guitar. That's one reason he spent a considerable amount of time and money to renovate his basement into the fully functioning Ace in the Hole studios, which includes a fully furnished rehearsal stage.

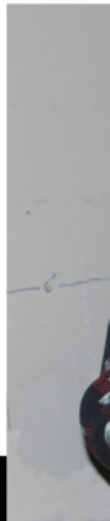
Across the hall from the practice area is a door with a metal sign that reads: "AREA 51: WARNING — RESTRICTED AREA — Use of deadly force authorized — NO TRESPASSING." Inside is the nerve center of the compound, the high-tech studio and vocal room where Frehley wrote and recorded much of *10,000 Volts* with engineer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Steve Brown of Eighties hair metal band Trixter. The duo also recorded at Brown's New Jersey studio, Mojo Vegas 6160.

Many of the guitars Ace used on *10,000 Volts*, as well as some of his most prized acquisitions (including a white Les Paul decorated with tiny lightbulbs that make patterns in the dark) hang on the wall within easy reach.

"I've always loved collecting guitars," he says. "In Kiss, when we pulled into a new city, instead of checking into the hotel, me and my guitar tech would drive around to all the local pawn shops. We got some great stuff that way."

Ace still sometimes combs pawn shops, but he also buys from modern retailers, including Reverb.com. He holds up a gorgeous blue Les Paul. "I got it about six months ago on Reverb for $2,000," he says. "I don't know who made it; I don't even know who painted it because that's not a stock





1. A fan approached Frehley with two versions of a guitar that he modeled after the cover of Ace's 2014 album, *Space Invader*. He said Ace could have one of the guitars if he'd just sign the other one, which the fan kept

2. Sign hanging on the door of Ace's home studio. The replica was made to look weather-beaten and wasn't stolen from a legendary military site in Nevada

3. A prized 1959 Les Paul Ace bought from a pawn shop while on tour with Kiss

4. A mini spaceman from Home Goods

5. Ace relaxes on a velvety blue couch in front of his decorated space wall, courtesy of Etsy peel-and-stick wallpaper

6. Ace's upstairs office is decorated with some rare finds, which he bought in bulk (for $150 each) at a Chicago pawn shop

7. Frehley shows off one of hundreds of pieces of fan art

8. Guitars line the control room of Ace's studio, including the silver glitter-painted Les Paul with blinking lights (center of frame), first used with Kiss around 1980

9. Ace with his legendary triple-humbucker Black Beauty Les Paul, which he hopes Gibson will use as the inspiration for a new signature model

10. Ace with his Don Felder-style double-neck Gibson EDS-1275 near his band's rehearsal stage

11. Gibson made Ace this personalized replica of the Firebird he used when he auditioned for Kiss. Ace bought the original guitar at We Buy Guitars in Midtown Manhattan

12. A pair of unfinished Les Pauls that Gibson sent Ace in the Eighties to paint. They're still waiting...

JON WIEDERHORN

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Gibson. But it's one of the best-playing Les Pauls I own, and I'm probably going to take it on tour with me when we go out again in 2024."

Though the title track for *10,000 Volts* wasn't the last song Frehley recorded, it was the first single he released, and the scribbly, original handwritten lyrics rest on a music stand near the chair of his control desk. Since he released the video for the title track on November 28, 2023, "10,000 Volts" has received close to a million streams on YouTube. The bluesy, rib-kicking anthem is quintessential Ace, combining the visceral clout of "Mission to Mars" and the classic melodicism of Ace's "Shock Me," from the 1977 Kiss album *Love Gun*.

"It's funny because I wrote both songs, 'Shock Me' and '10,000 Volts' about being electrocuted onstage during a Kiss show in Lakeville, Florida," Ace says, "I still love 'Shock Me,' but I might like '10,000 Volts' even better. It's just this kick-ass rock 'n' roll song that's really fun to play."

In addition to being a master of choice pentatonic leads, Frehley remains a theatrical performer, as evidenced by the lightning bolt and pyro-enhanced performance video for "10,000 Volts." Just don't expect future Ace shows to feature the kind of fireworks-blasting headstocks he played in Kiss. "I don't have any of those guitars around anymore," he says. "People kept offering me ridiculous amounts of money for them, so I sold them. But I still have the blueprints."

Speaking of Kiss, it would be remiss not to mention the recent kerfuffle that went down right before the band's (possibly) final tour. When Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley announced that Kiss would play their last-ever concert at Madison Square Garden, they talked about inviting Ace and drummer Peter Criss to take the stage with them. Word got out, and Frehley started looking forward to the opportunity to perform with his old bandmates for the first time since February 24, 2002, during the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics. Then he heard Stanley talking smack about him and insulting his playing.

"The thing is, when they first talked about us playing with them, they never really meant it, they just wanted to sell more tickets," Frehley says with a hint of annoyance. "And it all fell apart when they went on the *Howard Stern Show* and said that if they played with me and Peter, then they might as well change the band's name to Piss. But that's the way they are. And as far as I'm concerned, they did what they did, and I'm happy doing what I'm doing. I'm still going strong, and I've just done one of the best albums of my career."

JAYME THORNTON

Frehley started writing songs for *10,000 Volts* back in 2022 with his childhood friend, Peppy Castro, who played guitar in the Sixties psychedelic garage band Blues Magoos, and guitarist Derrek Hawkins, who toured with Ace in 2007. But Frehley wasn't excited with anything they wrote. When he shared his frustrations with his fiancée, she suggested Ace do some writing with her friend Steve Brown, who has worked with Def Leppard, Dennis DeYoung, Danger Danger and the Broadway musical "Rock of Ages."

"I knew him on a casual level back in the day," Ace says. "Steve was a big fan, and, like a lot of guitarists, he said seeing me in Kiss was one of the things that inspired him to play, which is really flattering. Fast-forward a bunch of years, and now he's a really talented songwriter and engineer who has worked with all these great people on all kinds of music. I figured, why not give it a shot? So I gave him a call."

Brown sent Frehley a professional demo of a swaggering, mid-paced, blues-based anthem full of sustained, electrified chords. Impressed, and not-

ing that the song contained a line about "walking on the moon" — an excellent move when writing for a "Spaceman" — Ace called Brown and told him he liked the track but wanted to rework the lyrics and change the title to "Walking on the Moon." And there was one other change he wanted to make.

"I said, 'Steve, this needs a bridge.' He goes, 'What do you mean it needs a bridge?' I go, 'It's great — but it needs a bridge.' He came over, we rewrote the lyrics, I put the bridge in, and the song was finished. No drama. We did the whole thing in a day. And the chemistry was so good, we just kept going."

"IT'S FUNNY, BECAUSE I WROTE BOTH SONGS, **'SHOCK ME' AND '10,000 VOLTS,'** ABOUT BEING ELECTROCUTED ONSTAGE DURING A KISS SHOW IN LAKEVILLE, FLORIDA"

Over most of 2023, whenever Frehley and Brown could line up their schedules, they got together at one of their home studios to work on new songs (about 25 times in total), and the chemistry was always kinetic. During one six-day session, the two wrote five songs. By October, 13 months after Frehley began the project, the two were tweaking the final mixes of *10,000 Volts*. Catchier and more cohesive than 2018's *Spaceman*, the album includes the heartrending piano-enhanced ballad "Life of a Stranger," the chuggy, propulsive "Cosmic Heart," the scorching title track and the infectious pop-metal riff-fests of "Cherry Medicine" and "Blinded."

Depending on the vibe of the track he worked on, Ace chose from a variety of Gibsons and sometimes a couple of Fender Stratocasters, plugged them into a Marshall JCM800 and let fly, using only his bridge pickup (he's disconnected the others). Buoyed by enthusiasm for the new songs and some real-life family and career drama he'd rather not talk about, Frehley injected both joy and frustration into his playing. And he recorded the solos impulsively and spontaneously, playing from the heart instead of planning out the progressions.

In addition to being excited to share his first batch of originals since *Spaceman*, he's eager to turn the tables on anyone who thought he wasn't good enough to play onstage with Kiss and demonstrate that he's as capable of releasing great songs as he was in 1978 and is firmly back in the groove.

Your last two records were covers albums. Why did you want to release a record of originals?

I looked at my contract and it said there was still a record I owed them, so I didn't have a choice. I didn't want them knocking on my door or canceling my contract. [*Laughs*] No, I was slated to do a studio record with original songs, and the timing was good. I figured I'd do another *Origins* [*covers album*] after that. The only cover on this one is "Life of a Stranger," which is by Nadia and was used over the credits of the first *Transporter* movie with Jason Statham.

Why did you want to cover a Latin-tinged electro-pop song that was released in 2002?

I just liked the song. She does it, like, real sparse pop techno. I wanted to do it with heavy drums, rippin' guitars and a really big chorus. It's something different for me. I always try to think out of the box. It's just a matter of brainstorming and coming up with new ideas.

How did you want *10,000 Volts* to be an evolution from *Spaceman*?

I wanted it to be a little more current. It was great working with Steve because he's in his fifties, so he's got a different perspective than I do, and he's been using ProTools for 30 years. I'm really happy with everything about the record, and the production is way better that a lot of my other stuff.

Did you and Steve write most of the songs over the past year?

We worked really quickly. The only old song is "Back in My Arms Again," which I wrote 40 years ago with Arthur Stead [*keyboardist for Frehley's Comet in 1984 and 1985*].

A lot of tried-and-true Ace Frehley fans have heard your old demos and have wondered why you didn't release that song earlier. The mid-tempo mood and yearning vocals have "Eighties rock radio hit" written all over it.

I don't know why I didn't do something with it. I really love it. But I've got so many songs I've written but haven't recorded, so it's not that strange. Plus, I was caught up with lots of other things. It just seemed like the song would work really well on *10,000 Volts,* and Steve agreed.

Once you had the songs written, did you and Steve record them together with other musicians?

The thing about the studio is, when you find the right path with the right team, there's a very relaxed feel. And part of that comes from having as few people in there with you as possible. I don't like having a lot of people in the control room when I'm recording. I learned that when I was doing my '78 solo album. There was me, Eddie Kramer, Anton Fig and that was it. I get distracted when there are three or four other people in there and everybody has an opinion, just like everybody has an asshole. It's just too much.

Do you feel less confident?

It's not that. See, I know what I want, right? I know what I'm looking for. And if we're not on the same page, shut your mouth. "Hey, fuck you. It's my record." Steve totally got that, and he understood it. We agreed on stuff 95 percent of the time, anyway, so there really wasn't any arguing. And he was always open to changing things to make them better. We both did whatever we could to make the songs as good as they could be.

When you write and record solo material, do you try to play differently than you did in Kiss?

I don't even think about Kiss when I write. It's my solo record and I just write the way I write and don't try to emulate anything. When I'm writing a song, I never think, "Oh, how would Kiss fans relate to this?" There are Ace fans, and, of course, a lot of Kiss fans enjoy my music, which is nice. But what Kiss has done in the past doesn't affect me at all.

Regardless of the vibe of the song, your guitar sound is instantly identifiable.

You plug a Les Paul into a Marshall and turn it up to 10 and you've got the perfect marriage, and I've been using that combination for 40-plus years. It has never let me down. So, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. There's one song I tried to do a little bit of a country feel on, and then I listened back to it and said, "No, it should be an Ace solo. I shouldn't be trying to copy country artists." And I think the new solo worked out better.

How important are Gibsons to your

Frehley performs in Cedar Park, Texas, July 13, 2023 (See page 24 for another photo from this show)

GARY MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

guitar sound?
Those are the meat and potatoes, but sometimes you need another flavor. A lot of times, when I lay down a rhythm track, I'll lay it down with a Les Paul, and then I'll double it with a Fender because a Fender has a completely different harmonic range than a Les Paul. And when you blend them together, you get a much thicker sound. That's a trick I learned from Pete Townshend, and I've been doing it forever.

Steve played rhythm guitar and bass on almost every song. He also played solos on "Walkin' on the Moon" and "Fightin' for Life." Isn't that your turf?
When Steve would write the music, a lot of the time he'd play a solo and say, "Ace, this is the kind of thing I think would work on this song." I'd record most of the solos, but a lot of his solos were really good. So, a couple times I said to him, "Steve, this solo you did is so good, let's just use it," because I don't know if I could have improved upon it. And if he did a great solo he deserved credit. I give credit where credit is due.

You've spoken before about being completely self-taught and learning by feeling around for what works. But that's not exactly true. You seem to have learned a lot from carefully listening to the players you've admired and incorporating some of what they do into your style.
That's true. I've learned from a lot of guys who sound like no one else.

"I DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT KISS WHEN I WRITE. IT'S MY SOLO RECORD AND I JUST WRITE THE WAY I WRITE AND DON'T TRY TO EMULATE ANYTHING"

When you hear Eric Clapton play, you know it's Clapton. Jimi Hendrix had his own style as well, and it was very distinctive; Townshend is the same way. He's the master of chord work. Townshend could play the same chord in a dozen different positions. I learned a lot from studying Pete Townshend. A lot of people don't know that he buried an acoustic guitar under the electric guitar to create a fuller sound. I use that now on some songs. You don't really hear it that much, but if you pull it out, you miss it because it helps support the song. And he's the one that really inspired me to mess around with the toggle switch.

Kiss were a quintessential American band, yet you cut your chops on a lot of great British players, which is kind of ironic since the British Invasion bands rooted their sound in older American blues.
I studied Clapton, Jeff Beck, Hendrix, Townshend, George Harrison, Keith Richards — the whole British Invasion — from the time I was 13 and my dad bought me my first electric guitar. There were a couple of American guitar players that influenced me, including Jim McCarty in the Detroit Wheels and Joe Walsh when he was in the James Gang. And I listened to B.B. King, Albert King and Freddie King. A lot of those Black blues guitarists had a way of playing that was just so unorthodox and simple, but great at the same time. Chuck Berry never played complicated solos. It was all about picking the note; it was the attitude and personality. And playing with attitude has so much to do with the way your guitar work comes out.

Did you pre-write your solos for the new album?
No, never. I just said, "Steve, hit the record button. What key is this in?" And then, boom, I'd go off and play it in four or five passes. We'd listen back to 'em and piece the best parts together in ProTools. A few mouse clicks later, you've got a guitar solo.

Do you tend to stay mostly within the pentatonic scale?
Yeah, because that's my style. It works. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. But at the same time, so much of what you do has to do with the way you pick the notes. You can play pinch harmonics, and bend the note, you can apply a lot of pressure with your pick or just a little. You can scrape the strings. There are all kinds of things you can do that have nothing to do with your fretting hand.

***10,000 Volts* stands alone as a solid album, which keeps you sounding more relevant than a lot of artists who continue to tour off past hits and live off former glory — no names mentioned.**
It's very rewarding to still be able to make records and have people want to listen to them. Just the reaction from the single "10,000 Volts" is really heartwarming and that keeps me excited. I'm excited to see how the other singles do, and I'm looking forward to touring. I see only positive stuff in the future. Thank God, I have a beautiful woman that I'm engaged to and a wonderful family. Thank God everybody's well. You can have a hundred million dollars in the bank, but if you don't have your health, you don't have anything. And with all that going for me, I can concentrate on music and continue to challenge myself and do different things. I want people to know it's me when they hear me, but I don't want to be doing the same old thing album after album. GW

AMERICA AT THE CROSSROADS

Presented by The National GUITAR Museum

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CLASS OF 1984

By DAMIAN FANELLI

Guitar World celebrates one of the greatest — if not the greatest — "guitar album years" of all time

'84 The Works

By Damian Fanelli and Andrew Daly

Our guide to 12 amazing months of six-string thunder (and a few other interesting things...)

JANUARY

THE YEAR KICKED off with a significant moment in instrumental guitar history, as 24-year-old **Steve Vai** unleashed *Flex-Able*, the first studio offering under his own name. The record was recorded at Stucco Blue Studios, AKA Vai's shed,

and features little of the tried-and-true shred-heavy antics of his later Eighties records, which was surely a result of Vai's time working with Frank Zappa.

Over in the Biggest Band in the World Department, Eddie Van Halen and company (also known as

Scorpions' Matthias Jabs, looking very "1984," performs in Rosemont, Illinois, May 20, 1984

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES (JABS) FUTURE (GW)

AS WE AT *Guitar World* famously spewed in our November 2023 issue, the electric guitar — in all its glorious and ridiculous excess — shredded itself to death by the end of the Eighties.

But long before the "death of shred" was even a glimmer in a flannel-clad, Fender Mustang-playing Seattleite's eye, you had your meat-and-potatoes Eighties years — years like '81, '82, '87 and '88; years when the guitar solo was king, emperor and Mayor of Beavertown, Pennsylvania, rolled into one; years when the faster, flashier and more inventive the guitarist, the shinier his or her gold-plated underwear.

And no individual slice of the Eighties was as big, as bright or as overflowing with shiny gold-plated underwear as 1984. The year was so awesome that Van Halen actually named their best-selling album after it.

Just think about it: besides Van Halen, you had now-classic releases by artists with names like Metallica, Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Prince, Bon Jovi, Deep Purple, the Pretenders, the Cars, Dio, Run-DMC, King Crimson, the Bangles, Yngwie Malmsteen, U2, Steve Vai, Queen, Whitesnake, the Smiths, Albert Collins, Albert King, the Cars, the Cure, Quiet Riot, the Honeydrippers, Johnny Winter, David Bowie, David Gilmour, Bruce Springsteen, Kiss, Ramones, Scorpions and R.E.M. Jiminy Christmas, even Spinal Tap had an (awesome) album!

Of course, there were other great "guitar album years" throughout history, like, say, 1969. But the thing is, in 1969, you had all your major 1969 dudes; in 1984, you still had most of those dudes — Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and Pete Townshend were all still making waves in their own behind-the-scenes ways — *but you also had Eddie Van Halen*. On top of that, you had Stevie Ray Vaughan, Steve Vai, Yngwie Malmsteen, Joan Jett, Gary Moore, Warren DeMartini, Nile Rodgers, Glenn Tipton, Brian May, the Edge, Lita Ford, Robert Fripp, Adrian Belew, Adrian Smith, Susanna Hoffs, Carlos Cavazo, Vivian Campbell, Prince, Elliot Easton, Jamie West-Oram, Eddie Martinez, Andy Summers, Bob Mould and Dave Edmunds. Hell, you even had Red Hot Chili Peppers, Slayer, Stryper and Pantera. It was the perfect convergence of vintage, middle period, brand-spanking new and "tomorrow's stars!"

And then there's this: Like a lot of years before and after it, in 1984 the denizens of high school cafeterias across the universe judged each other based on the music they listened to or — in our case — played. But there was no wrong answer in 1984; you were cool if you could play "Hot for Teacher," but you were just as cool if you figured out how to play "Scuttle Buttin'." You were cool if you loved the Edge, Jethro Tull, Son Seals, Hanoi Rocks, Stray Cats, Yes, Queen, Run-DMC, Metallica, Los Lobos, Ricky Skaggs, Lou Reed, Talking Heads, Michael Hedges, Ultravox, ZZ Top or that amazing Vai guy. You were cool if your blues band opened its third set with Johnny Copeland's "Don't Stop by the Creek, Son" or if your rock band chose "Perfect Strangers" as its official battle of the bands song (We lost, by the way).

All roads lead to guitar in 1984, and guitar was the capital of the universe. Or at least the Mayor of Beavertown, Pennsylvania!

Van Halen) dropped the aptly titled *1984* on January 9. It features some of the explosive SoCal group's most iconic cuts, including "Jump," which went to Number 1 on the U.S. *Billboard* chart, and "Hot for Teacher," which came with an inescapable MTV music video for the ages.

And then there was **Judas Priest**, who released *Defenders of the Faith* (a name *Guitar World* borrowed for one of its longest-running recurring features) on January 13. The record was seething with doubled-down licks from K.K. Downing and Glenn Tipton, but what the album — specifically "Eat Me Alive" — is known best for is drawing fire from Tipper Gore's Parents Music Resource Center [*PMRC*], which deemed Priest's record "objectionable" for its themes of "oral sex at gunpoint." Ouch!

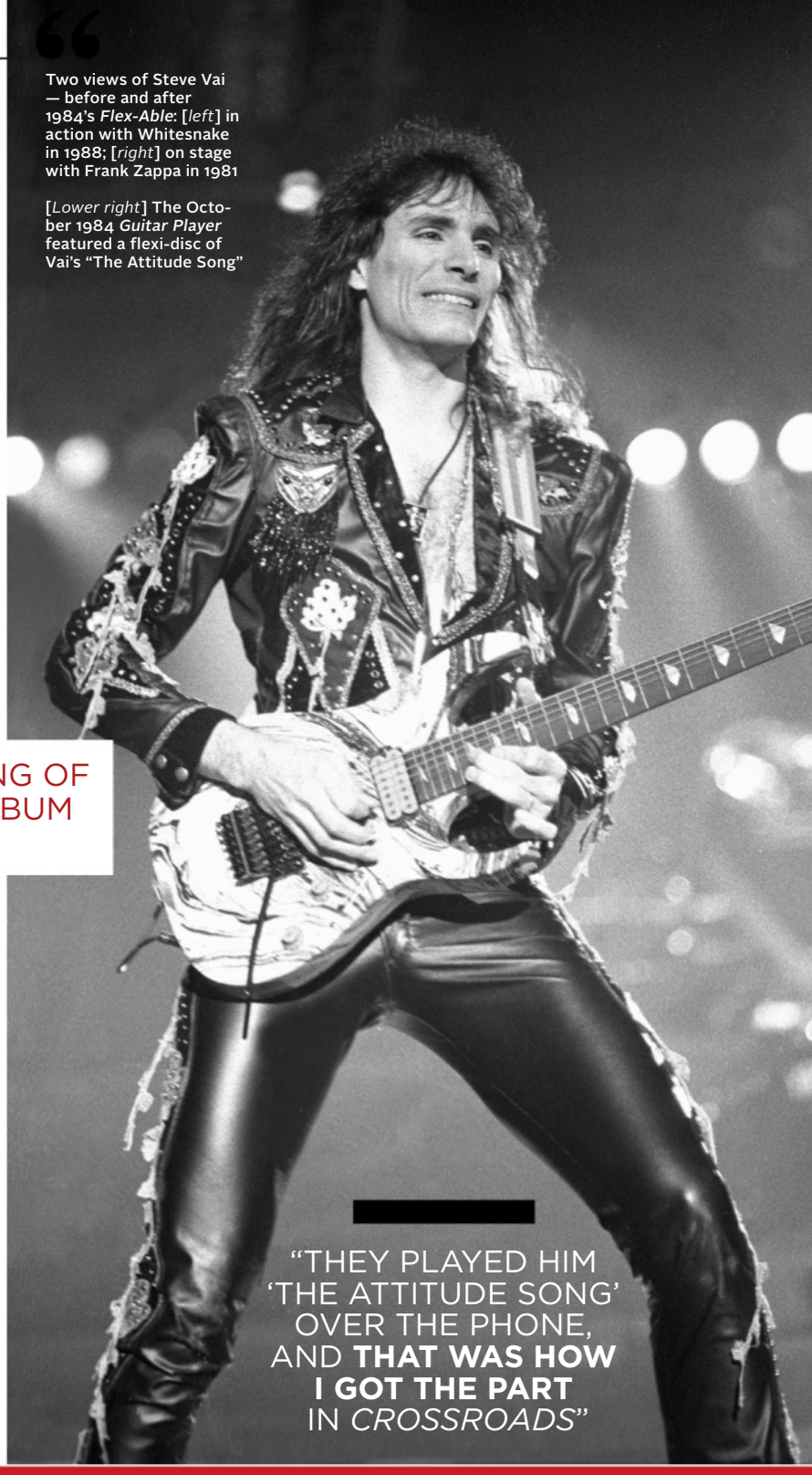
> Judas Priest's *Defenders of the Faith* was seething with doubled-down licks from K.K. Downing and Glenn Tipton

Beatles fans who were still smarting from the 1980 murder of **John Lennon** finally got to hear *Milk and Honey*, the album Lennon recorded — with guitarists Earl Slick and Hugh McCracken — at the same time as 1980's

1984

STEVE VAI

Flex-Able



Two views of Steve Vai — before and after 1984's *Flex-Able*: [*left*] in action with Whitesnake in 1988; [*right*] on stage with Frank Zappa in 1981

[*Lower right*] The October 1984 *Guitar Player* featured a flexi-disc of Vai's "The Attitude Song"

"THEY PLAYED HIM 'THE ATTITUDE SONG' OVER THE PHONE, AND **THAT WAS HOW I GOT THE PART** IN *CROSSROADS*"

STEVE VAI RECOUNTS THE MAKING OF HIS ATTITUDE-PACKED DEBUT ALBUM

By Mark McStea

THE APPEARANCE OF *Flex-Able*, the self-financed debut album by Steve Vai, tore up the rule book for what could be achieved by an electric guitar wielded with deadly intent. Unleashed in 1984, it heralded the arrival of the most important new figure in rock guitar since Eddie Van Halen. The record served as a calling card for the mind-blowing array of Vai's unearthly gifts. There is the talking guitar on "Next Stop Earth," which predates his work on David Lee Roth's "Yankee Rose" in 1986. "Call It Sleep" foreshadows the intensely emotional "For the Love of God" from 1990 — and then there's "The Attitude Song," a recording that's as significant in the annals of shred guitar as "Eruption" and Yngwie Malmsteen's "Far Beyond the Sun." Vai simply states, "It was a snapshot of all my different musical interests."

The genesis of *Flex-Able* lay in Vai's earliest guitar explorations as a kid, when he was just embarking on the journey that would take him to the head table in the pantheon of the guitar gods. "Along with the thrill of playing guitar, when I was a kid, was the thrill of recording sound on sound. I'd always been fascinated by it."

Double Fantasy. The album is awash with odd textures ("(Forgive Me) My Little Flower Princess"), catchy riffs ("Nobody Told Me") and rough-around-the-edges charm ("I Don't Wanna Face It"). For an interview with Slick, head to page 28.

January wrapped with **the Pretenders'** *Learning to Crawl*, their first record without the late James Honeyman-Scott — but it did feature "Back on the Chain Gang" and a talented new guitarist named Robbie McIntosh. **Bon Jovi's** self-titled debut was released on the 23rd and contained the Richie Sambora-heavy single, "Runaway." **Whitesnake's** *Slide It In* — aka their first album to feature the brooding wall-of-Marshalls sound of John Sykes — appeared a week later.

Anthrax's hefty debut, the Scott Ian-packed *Fistful of Metal*, joined the party on the 28th, followed by **Gary Moore's** fourth solo album, *Victims of the Future*, which is best remembered for its cover of the Yardbirds' "Shapes of Things" (not to mention its blazing guitar solo, which picked up where Jeff Beck left off 18 years earlier).

FEBRUARY

SIMPLE MINDS RELEASED *Sparkle in the Rain*, an album awash in Charlie Burchill's New Wave sounds as heard on "Waterfront." In a similar vein, **Modern English** followed up their early Eighties success (1982's "I Melt with You") with *Rico-*

How did the idea of recording *Flex-Able* come about?
I purchased an eight-track, quarter-inch tape recorder, and that was when I started to record *Flex-Able*. When I first started on it, I had no intention of making a record that I would release and that people would hear. I recorded a lot more than what ended up on the album, but when I listened to it, I thought it sounded terrible — it wasn't in time and the production was so sub-par. I took stock and realized I'd been watching Frank [*Zappa*] work and he was so precise about the sound, the groove, the timing, everything — so I trashed the whole record and started again from scratch.

Who did you see as your target audience?
I never thought about that; I had no idea I was necessarily even going to release it. It was just for sheer fun and experimentation. Then I sent the record to *Guitar Player* magazine, and they put "The Attitude Song" in the magazine as one of their tear-out flexi-discs, and that really gave the record some legs. [*Editor's note: It was the October 1984 issue of* GP*, which stars Stevie Ray Vaughan on the cover.*]

I guess many people, like me, tracked the album down, expecting it to all be in the same vein as "The Attitude Song" and were then caught off-guard by the diversity of the music that was on there.
Yes. I thought people would say "this isn't what I signed up for" if they only knew "The Attitude Song." I guess if the whole album had been like that people might have thought it was a classic, but that wasn't what I was interested in doing. There isn't much guitar at all for the first three tracks. Nobody gave me the memo about what a record should sound like, which is some of the beauty of the album.

At that time, when music was released on record, the album seemed to be neatly divided between side one, which had the quirky songs, and side two, which was predominantly shred guitar. Was that intentional?
No; I didn't know anything about that stuff. When I sequenced it, I just wondered which song should come next for the best flow. At the time, I didn't see myself as a professional instrumental guitarist; it was just which songs I liked.

What guitars did you use to record the album?
Some of it was a Strat, and I also had a couple of guitars made at that time. I was starting to feel that there was a lot about standard guitars that didn't fit my style. I wanted to be able to pull up on the whammy bar to take notes really high. At the time, a Strat or a Bigsby just gave about a half step. I had a guitar that I put together and I noticed that the only reason the notes wouldn't go sharp is because there was a block stopping the trem system; I chopped the block out and I had what I think was the first floating trem. I wrote "The Attitude Song" using that technology.

Did the offers that you started to get come as a result of the success of the album?
The first thing that came in was the *Crossroads* movie [*1986*]. The guitar duel scene with Ry Cooder wasn't working. Ry called up *Guitar Player* and asked who the new hotshot on the block was. Working with David Lee Roth came about because of that track as well. That piece of music has been a hugely pivotal moment in my life, and rightly so, I think, because it was very innovative. I didn't realize a lot of the things I was doing at that time were unique. I've tried to maintain that trend of trying to innovate and find something unique throughout my career.

JOHN ATASHIAN/GETTY IMAGES (1988) GARY GERSHOFF/GETTY IMAGES (1981) FUTURE (GP)

RATT

chet Days. There were no huge hits on the cards this time around — just a solid pop rock album with some pithy and even overdriven sounds courtesy of Gary McDowell. Meanwhile, U.K. session master Chris Spedding was all over **Roger Daltrey's** well-received *Parting Should Be Painless*, the singer's first solo album to be released after the Who's initial breakup. Easing on over to the hair metal section, **Ratt's** debut, *Out of the Cellar*, which hit the streets in the middle of the month, spawned the hit "Round and Round," but it was the video for "Back for More" — which not only harbored a mega solo by Warren DeMartini but featured the lovely Tawny Kitaen — that was the most memorable.

On his grooving cover of the Yardbirds' "Shapes of Things," Gary Moore picked up where Jeff Beck left off 18 years earlier

We're not going anywhere without mentioning **Spinal Tap's** most famous work, *This Is Spinal Tap* (aka just plain ol' *Spinal Tap*), an album that's bulging out of its Spandex with, um, one-of-a-kind fretwork by Nigel Tufnel and David

PEACE, LOVE, TRUTH AND PLENTY

THE MUSICAL UTOPIA OF **VAN HALEN**'S MASTERPIECE, *1984*

By Chris Gill

GEORGE ORWELL'S NOVEL *1984* envisioned a dystopian future where totalitarian governments ruled the world, and the average person's attempts to enjoy even the slightest personal pleasure were patrolled and punished by the Thought Police in service of Big Brother. However, when mankind finally reached that symbolic year, the prevailing atmosphere was more of a hedonistic non-stop party than a period of peril. We have the power of the mighty Van Halen to thank for much of that.

Considered by many — including Eddie Van Halen himself — as the band's masterpiece, *1984* was one of Van Halen's best-selling albums and one of the best-selling rock albums of the entire Eighties. It has earned RIAA Diamond certification for surpassing 10 million units sold — a feat the band only matched with their 1978 debut album, with the two perfectly bookending the beginning and end of Van Halen's classic era with David Lee Roth fronting the band.

Clocking in at a lean 33 minutes and 22 seconds, *1984* was, as the saying goes, all killer and no filler. Even the best-

DAVID TAN/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

St. Hubbins. If you haven't heard them in a while, it might be time to break out "Hell Hole," "Tonight I'm Gonna Rock You Tonight" or "Stonehenge." After all, these songs were done in "Dobly"! Meanwhile, **Ted Nugent** released *Penetrator*, a highlight of which is the Nuge's monster solo on the Bryan Adams-penned "(Where Do You) Draw the Line."

Europe — featuring guitarist John Norum (that guy from page 17) — gave us *Wings of Tomorrow* on February 24, followed by **the Smiths,** whose self-titled debut launched the legend of "The Man Who Would Not Solo," aka Johnny Marr, via cuts like "Still Ill." Not to be outdone, **Queen** released *The Works* on the 27th, bringing Brian May back to the forefront on decade-defining cuts like "Radio Ga Ga," the triumphant "I Want to Break Free" and "Hammer to Fall," which features perhaps the finest riff and tone of May's career. Discuss.

MARCH

BLACK FLAG KICKED things off nastily with *My War*, the Greg Ginn-led hardcore punk band's first without founding bassist Chuck Dukowski, although he did pen the title cut. And behemoths of proto-doom, **Trouble**, weren't far behind, as they

Van Halen backstage in Atlanta, February 23, 1984; [*from left*] Eddie Van Halen, a hungry David Lee Roth, Michael Anthony and Alex Van Halen

continued on page 52

launched *Psalm 9*, aka *Trouble* on the 10th, leading to the Gibson SG-wielding Bruce Franklin becoming a portrait of all things doom guitar thereafter. Continuing with eclecticism, **Marillion** gave us *Fugazi* on March 13, an album that showcased Steve Rothery's post-punk-meets-neo-prog vibe on songs such as "Punch and Judy."

In keeping with the titans-of-prog theme, **King Crimson** showcased the insane duo of Robert Fripp and Adrian Belew on *Three of a Perfect Pair*,

Queen released *The Works* on the 27th, bringing Brian May back to the forefront on decade-defining cuts like "Radio Ga Ga"

crafting an odyssey for the ages. Listen to "Industry" and "No Warning" to catch the vibe. Let us not forget a solid live album by Mark Knopfler and **Dire Straits** — *Alchemy: Dire Straits Live* — not to mention **the Cars'** *Heartbeat City*, which, although not quite packed with rippin' guitar solos, does showcase Elliot Easton's precise, melodic phrasing, as heard on "You Might Think." And hey, it was good enough to get him on our September cover of *GW* that year! And then there was *Talk Show* by **the Go-Gos**, star-

selling album of all-time, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, can't make that boast (does anyone even remember "Baby Be Mine" and "The Lady in My Life"?). *1984* produced an impressive string of four hit singles, with "Jump" delivering Van Halen's only Number 1 charting hit single in the band's entire career. "Panama" and "I'll Wait" both peaked at Number 13, and "Hot for Teacher" came in at a not-too-shabby Number 56. Even the album's "deep" tracks — "Top Jimmy," "Drop Dead Legs," "Girl Gone Bad" and "House of Pain" — were scorchers too hot for the Top 40, but found a welcoming home on more adventurous FM station playlists. The only outlier is the album's title track, but Ed's solo synth performance perfectly set the mood as a brief overture that boldly introduced Van Halen's brave new world.

FUTURE CONTROL

With 40 years of hindsight, it's tempting to look back and conclude that the phenomenal popularity of *1984* was primarily due to it being the perfect album released at the perfect time. However, its success also benefited significantly from several years of extremely hard work leading up to its release, along with a series of high-profile events that brought Van Halen prominently into the public's awareness.

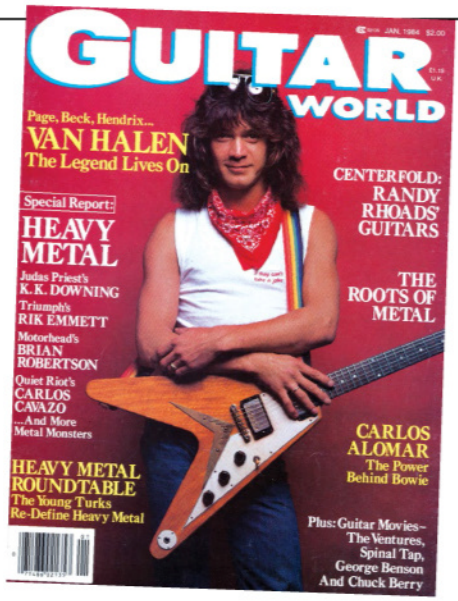
During the early Eighties, Van Halen had become one of the world's biggest touring acts. The band sold out every single one of its 83 shows in the United States and Canada on its 1982 "Hide Your Sheep" tour, and in early 1983 they made their first ever appearances in South America during a month-long leg that introduced the band to thousands of rabid fans. A few months later, Van Halen staked a claim as the biggest band in the world when they headlined "Heavy Metal Day" on May 29, 1983, at the US Festival, performing in front of an estimated audience of 375,000 — Van Halen's largest audience ever. Their fee for the US Festival gig was $1.5 million, setting a new world record at the time.

Van Halen was also experiencing a significant upward trajectory in record sales. *1984*'s predecessor, *Diver Down*, was a commercial success thanks in large part to the hit status of the 1982 single "(Oh) Pretty Woman," which peaked at Number 12 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 singles chart. The only previous time that Van Halen cracked the Top 20 was when "Dance the Night Away" reached Number 15, and that was all the way back in 1979. From their debut effort onward, each album that Van Halen released charted higher than its predecessor, with *Diver Down* peaking at Number 3 compared to *Fair Warning*'s top position at Number 5.

> **"I WAS NOT A POP GUY,** EVEN THOUGH I HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF HOW TO WRITE A POP SONG"
>
> **EDDIE VAN HALEN (2014)**

Van Halen's tour, album and single statistics were notable, but what truly catapulted the band into the public limelight was Ed's increasing celebrity status, even though the guitarist never sought the spotlight and was never comfortable with being called a rock star. His marriage to popular television actress Valerie Bertinelli led to appearances on mainstream prime time shows like *Entertainment Tonight*, making the Van Halen name a household word. Ed's charming, down-to-earth demeanor won over many new fans who would have been shocked by the raucous atmosphere at a typical Van Halen concert, let alone the band's backstage antics.

But perhaps the biggest turning point that made Ed a bona fide celebrity was his guest appearance on Michael Jackson's 1982 album *Thriller*, on "Beat It." Jackson wanted to record a rock song, and he knew that getting the world's most popular guitarist to play a solo would introduce and endear the singer to an entirely new audience. What Ed didn't realize at the time was that his performance on *Thriller* would similarly cause Jackson's fans to notice Van Halen. "Beat It" went on to top the charts worldwide, and those 33 seconds of shredding guitar bliss became an immortal symbol of the most enduring cultural crossover of pop, R&B and rock.



Eddie didn't want his name to appear on *Thriller*'s credits, mainly to keep the session a secret from his bandmates, but there was no mistaking who performed that solo. Despite his request to remain incognito, record company and musician's union agreements led to his name appearing four times in the liner notes, and his wife Valerie and engineer Donn Landee, who had recorded every Van Halen to date, also were thanked for good measure. It didn't matter anyways as David Lee Roth immediately knew it was Ed the first time he heard "Beat It" blaring from a car stereo in a 7-Eleven parking lot.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Edward Van Halen's creative inspiration increasingly grew during the early Eighties as he broadened his horizons into new musical styles and

ring the underappreciated Charlotte Caffe, Kathy Valentine and Jane Wiedlin.

On March 27, NYC hip-hoppers **Run-DMC** surprised and hypnotized with their self-titled debut album, a disc that famously features "Rock Box," a fun, manic, guitar-heavy melding of genres. The man behind the Hamer headstock? Eddie Martinez. "[*Producer*] Larry [*Smith*] knew I was a rocker," Martinez says. "He called and said, 'Why don't you put some rock shit on this stuff?' It was just a DMX drum machine and his bass guitar. There might have been some raps and a little keyboard. I had a great time stacking guitars and doing my thing on it. I used a Music Man amp with two 12s; my guitar was a red Hamer."

Closing out March, German heavy metal legends **Scorpions** kicked the doors in with *Love at First Sting* and made waves via massive cuts like "Rock You Like a Hurricane" and "Still Loving You" (transcribed on page 88) reminding the world of Rudolph Schenker and Matthias Jabs' greatness as a gunslinging, fire-breathing duo of old-school metal for the hair metal era.

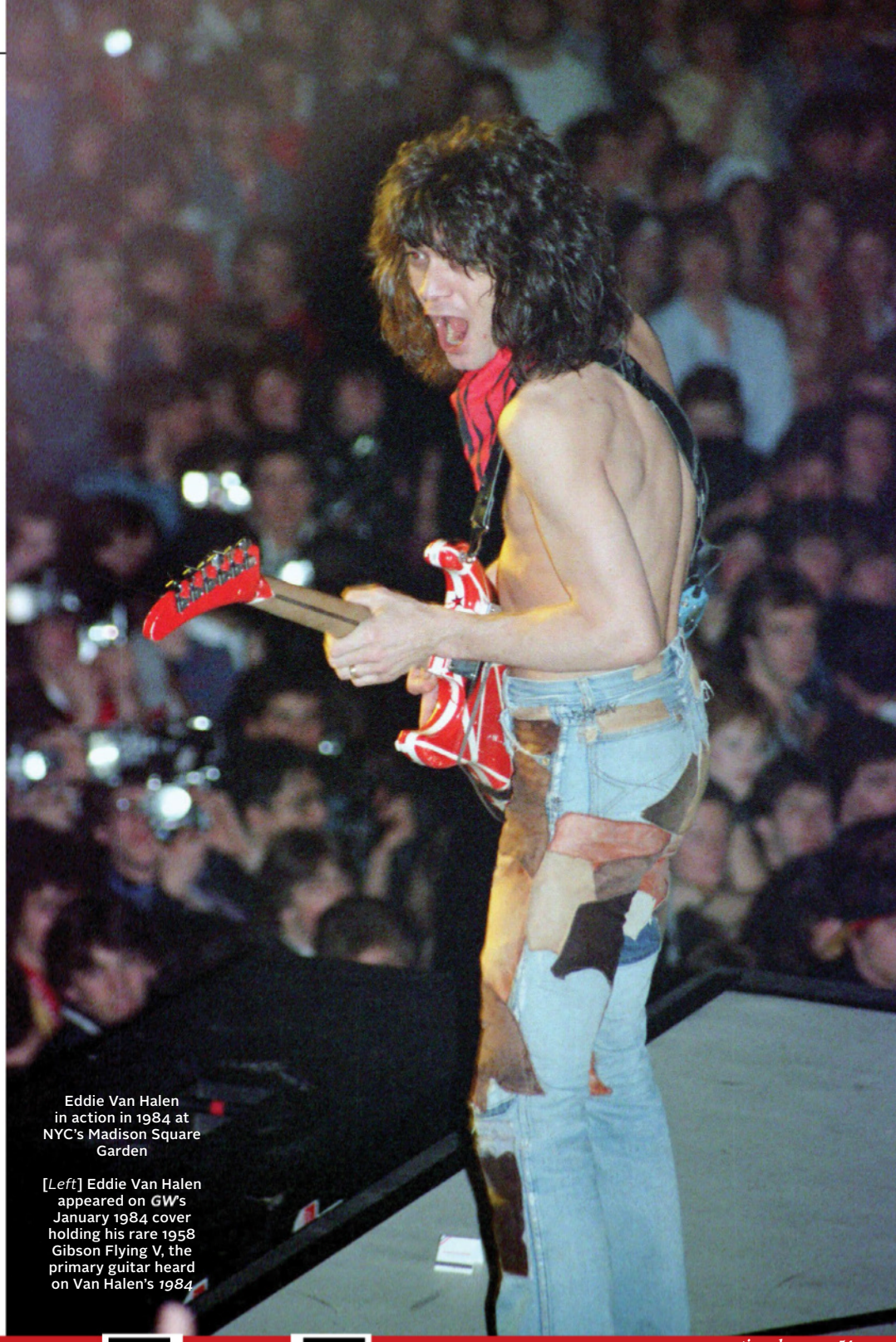
APRIL

APRIL 1 IS known for its fools, but we guess no one told **Johnny Winter**, who

techniques and explored instruments beyond the guitar. While he was initially pleased with Van Halen's fifth album, *Diver Down*, he wasn't happy with the rapid-fire approach to the sessions, which were completed in a mad rush over a period of 12 days. On the band's previous album, *Fair Warning*, Ed had finally become comfortable with spending considerably more time recording and crafting multiple guitar tracks in the studio while also experimenting with a broader palette of guitar tones. He felt that the slam-bang live performance blueprint used on *Diver Down* was a regression to the band's first three albums, and the outcome left him creatively unsatisfied.

"I was always butting heads with (producer) Ted Templeman about what makes a good record," Van Halen said in 2014. "*Diver Down* was a turning point for me because half of it was cover tunes. When we made *Fair Warning* I spent a lot more time with (engineer) Donn Landee working on my sound. I became much more involved in the recording process. To me, *Fair Warning* was more true to what I am and what I believe Van Halen is. We're a hard rock band, and we were an album band. I like odd things. I was not a pop guy, even though I have a good sense of how to write a pop song. When we started work on *1984* I wanted to ram it up Ted's poop chute and show him that we could make a great record without any cover tunes and do it our way."

In order to be able to do things his way, Ed took dominant control of the creative reins by building a professional multitrack studio at home in 1982. Initially, the plan was to build a studio for recording demos, but as work progressed the guitarist realized that, with Landee working by his side, he could record Van Halen's next album there.



MPI04/MEDIAPUNCH INC./ALAMY (EVH) FUTURE (GW; ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHER, GLEN LA FERMAN)

Eddie Van Halen in action in 1984 at NYC's Madison Square Garden

[*Left*] Eddie Van Halen appeared on ***GW***'s January 1984 cover holding his rare 1958 Gibson Flying V, the primary guitar heard on Van Halen's *1984*

continued on page 54

released *Guitar Slinger* (via mighty Alligator Records) on that date. The record is notable, as it was the second in a row to feature zero original compositions, not that it mattered; it grabbed a Grammy nomination for Best Traditional Blues Album. While Winter was in Chicago, **R.E.M.** were creating *Reckoning* in North Carolina; the album shows off Peter Buck's jangly fretwork on parenthesis-heavy songs like "So. Central Rain (I'm Sorry)" and "(Don't Go Back to) Rockville." As luck and natural segues would have it, **Lou Reed** — one of R.E.M.'s biggest early influences — dropped *New Sensations* the same week. The often-overlooked album finds Reed and Fernando Saunders trading six-string duties.

Run-DMC's "Rock Box" is a fun, manic, guitar-heavy melding of genres starring session ace Eddie Martinez and his red Hamer

April's fun didn't stop there, as more prog-rock badassery was afoot, with Canadian powerhouse **Rush** going full synth with *Grace Under Pressure*. Indeed, Alex Lifeson (that guy from page 32) was kinda, sorta pushed off to the side, but hey, "The Body Electric" is rhythmic and danceable as hell,

"I did not set out to build a full-blown studio," Ed admitted. "I just wanted a better place to put my music together so I could show it to the guys. I never imagined that it would turn into what it did until we started building it. Slowly it turned into a lot more than I originally envisioned. Everybody else was even more surprised than I was, especially Ted. They thought I was just building a little demo room. Then Donn said, 'No man! We're going to make records up here!' Donn and I had grown really close and had a common vision. Everybody was afraid that Donn and I were taking control. Well... yes! That's exactly what we did, and the results proved that we weren't idiots."

Ed's new home studio, named "5150" after the California law code for taking a mentally disordered person into custody when that person is considered a danger to others, was completed by the end of 1982. In a recent interview with Greg Renoff for *Tape Op* magazine, Landee recalls that the first recording session took place on January 2, 1983, with Ed on synthesizer and his brother Alex Van Halen on drums.

Although Ed said in his 2014 *Guitar World* interview that he didn't want to record cover tunes, ironically the very first song ever recorded at 5150 was a cover of Wilson Pickett's "In the Midnight Hour." It's very likely that this was a calculated move on Ed's part to appease David Lee Roth and Templeman, perhaps hoping to convince them that the studio was indeed up to the task after they worked there and heard the results. The fact that the song was never released and is still locked up in 5150's vaults suggests that Ed may have never actually wanted to record it in the first place.

However, Ed boldly revealed his hand with his next move. Over the previous few years, the guitarist had worked on a synth-dominated song that would later be named "Jump" after Roth wrote the lyrics, and with the studio up and running he recorded an instrumental demo of the tune, performed on an Oberheim OB-Xa synthesizer with accompaniment from Al on drums and Michael Anthony on bass.

"When I first played 'Jump' for the guys nobody wanted to have anything to do with it," Ed said. "Dave said that I was a guitar hero and I shouldn't be playing keyboards. But when Ted heard the demo and said it was a stone-cold hit, everyone started to like it more. Ted only cared about 'Jump.' He really didn't care much about the rest of the record and just wanted that one hit."

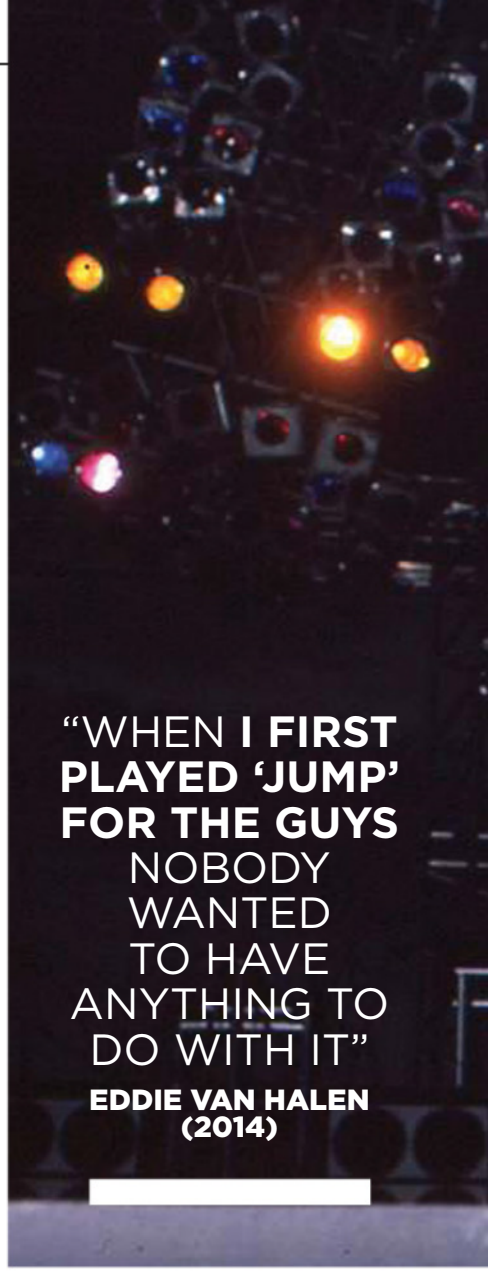
The band worked diligently recording new material for most of 1983, with the exception of the month of May, which they spent preparing for their appearance at the US Festival. Ed particularly reveled in having "unchained" freedom to experiment whenever and for as long as he pleased. This included some explorations he wouldn't have tried at a regular studio, like when he backed up his 1970 Lamborghini Miura S near 5150's doors and miked its mighty roar. Initially intended for use during the chorus of "Jump," the Lamborghini's forceful growl eventually found its immortal home on the bridge of "Panama."

NECESSARY TOOLS FOR THE PARTY

In addition to equipping 5150 with a solid selection of classic studio gear that included a Universal Audio console purchased from United Western Studios, 3M M56 16-track tape machine and various items of high-end outboard gear such as Eventide Harmonizers, Teletronix LA-2A and UREI 1176 limiters, Lexicon Prime Time digital delay and EMT140ST plate reverb, Ed also added a wide variety of new instruments to his creative arsenal.

Ed had become enamored with the Oberheim OB-Xa polyphonic synthesizer and its updated version the OB-8, and they played a major role in three of the album's songs. Keyboards had actually prominently appeared on all three of Van Halen's previous albums — a Wurlitzer electric piano on "And the Cradle Will Rock..." (*Women and Children First*), an Electro-Harmonix Mini-Synthesizer on "Saturday Afternoon in the Park" and "One Foot Out the Door" (*Fair Warning*) and a Mini Moog on "Dancing in the Street" (*Diver Down*) — but they were distorted and usually employed as ersatz guitars. With "1984," "Jump" and "I'll Wait," there was no mistaking that Ed was playing synths.

However, Ed was still a guitarist at heart and to his core, and he made many new additions to his guitar collection. The most notable newcomer was a rare vintage 1958 Gibson Flying V that Ed bought from Dan Martin of Missouri's St. Charles Guitar Exchange — the first of many vintage guitars Ed would buy from the dealer over the years. The V was Van Halen's



"WHEN **I FIRST PLAYED 'JUMP' FOR THE GUYS** NOBODY WANTED TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT"

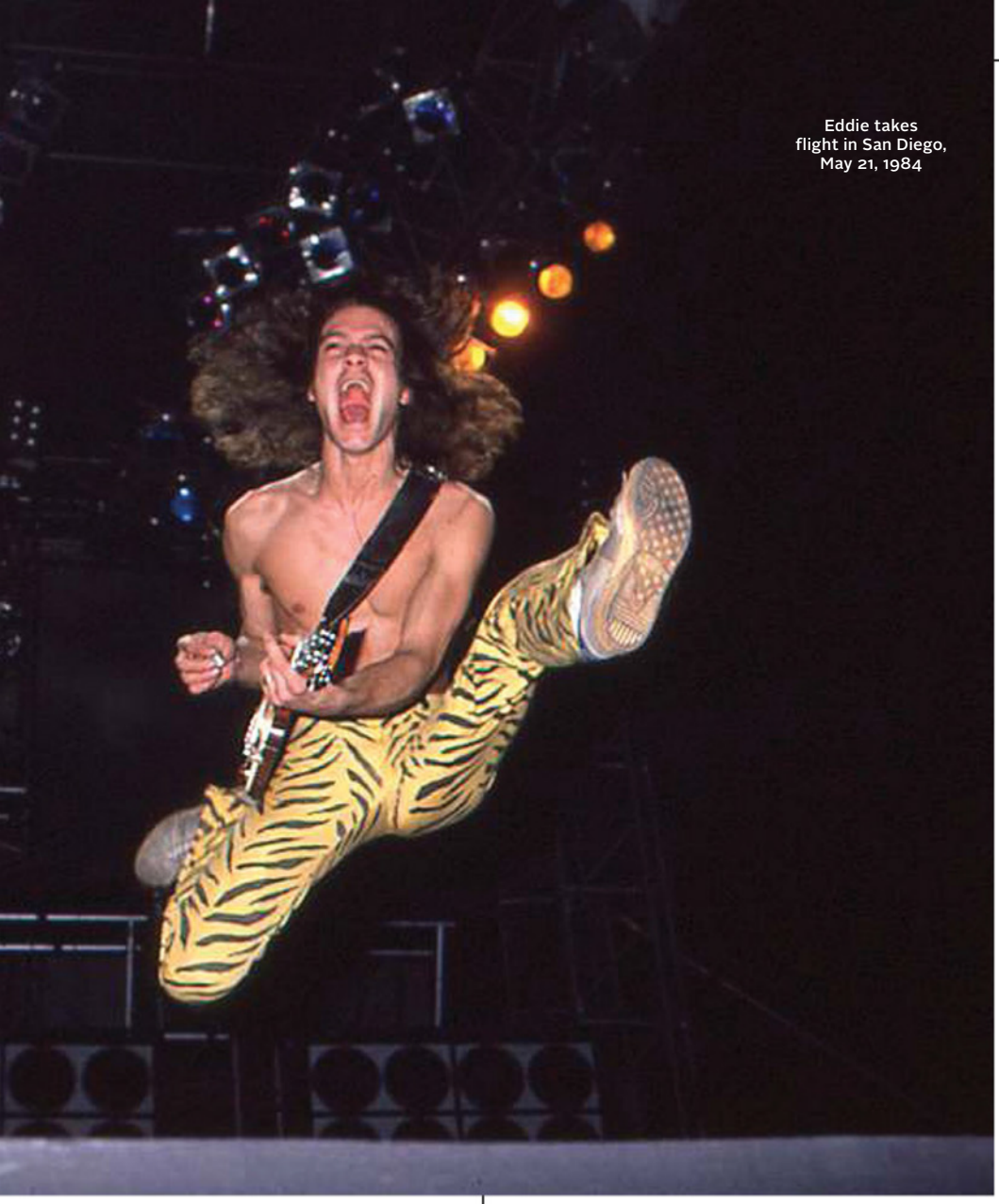
EDDIE VAN HALEN (2014)

and polarizing as it is, "Afterimage" remains one of Rush's greatest songs. **Ultravox's** *Lament*, released on the 6th, gave guitarist Midge Ure plenty of room to spread out — at least on "One Small Day"; **INXS's** *The Swing* brought us the rocking title track and the Talking Heads-style funk of "Face the Change."

Closing out the month was an amalgam of blues and, you guessed it, prog, with **Roger Waters'** first post-Pink Floyd concept-album affair, *The Pros and Cons of Hitchhiking*. The record features a majestic Eric Clapton, who played like a stone-cold legend. Indeed, for least a moment, Clapton was God once again.

And speaking of god-like playing, this seems as good a time as any to mention **Pat Metheny's** masterful 1984 album, *Rejoicing*; we don't know its exact '84 release date, but we do know this bit of brilliance was recorded over a few days in November 1983 and released a few months later. And while Metheny is amazing as always, check out Billy Higgins' drumming. Another album

Eric Clapton played like a stone-cold legend on Roger Waters' 1984 album, *The Pros and Cons of Hitchhiking*



Eddie takes flight in San Diego, May 21, 1984

KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

primary guitar on the album, used to record "Hot For Teacher," "Girl Gone Bad," the main riff of "Drop Dead Legs" and, as recently discovered, quite possibly for "Jump" [*researcher Allan Garber has uncovered a behind-the-bridge pick scrape in the isolated guitar track, corresponding sonically with the V's tailpiece configuration*].

The guitarist had also acquired a few of Steve Ripley's stereo guitars, featuring hexaphonic pickups (essentially each string had its own individual pickup) and panning controls for each string. Ed put the Ripley to good use on "Top Jimmy," using an open D7 tuning (DADACD, low to high) and playing harmonics that bounced across the stereo soundscape. This is probably the song called "Ripley" on a Warner Bros. memo that Ted Templeman wrote on August 23, 1983. Ed later recycled the title for another song he wrote for *The Wild Life* soundtrack since it also used the Ripley guitar. That song later became "Blood and Fire" on Van Halen's 2012 *A Different Kind of Truth* album.

Photos taken at 5150 during this period show a Veilette-Citron Shark baritone guitar, but apparently any songs where he might have used it didn't make the final cut on the album. That Warner Bros. memo lists a song called "Baritone Slide" – very likely an unreleased or unfinished track featuring this instrument.

Ed had given conflicting reports over the years about the use of his original Frankenstein guitar or his Kramer 5150 to record the album. He had officially publicly retired the Frankenstein starting with the tour in support of *1984*, but it's plausible that he used it for one last hurrah. However, Ed also had a habit of immediately putting new guitars to use once they orbited into his universe. As the 5150 became his favorite main guitar on albums recorded for the remainder of the Eighties, he may have played it on *1984*. But one confirmed constant throughout all of Van Halen's first six albums was the use of his 1968 Marshall Super Lead 100-watt head with its voltage reduced via a Variac. "I had my old faithful Marshall head and bare wooden 4x12 cabinet facing off into a corner," he recalled. "Al was in the other corner, and we set up some baffles to have isolation between my guitar and the drums. Because the space was so limited, Alex had to use a Simmons kit except for the snare."

Ed employed effects much more sparingly than he had on previous Van Halen albums. Most notably, he used a pair of Eventide H910 or H949 Harmonizers that were slightly detuned and individually panned left and right to provide a stereo spread and subtle chorus effect on many guitar tracks. "Panama"

continued on page 56

whose release date has been lost to the mists of time is **the Del Fuegos'** *The Longest Day*, a rootsy yet punky album that perfectly encapsulates 1984's anything-goes-as-long-as-there's-a-guitar-involved mentality. It also realizes what the Clash were going for with their cover of Vince Taylor's "Brand New Cadillac." And let us not forget the amazing *Aerial Boundaries* by the Martin D-28-playing **Michael Hedges**; it's one of two Hedges albums from the Eighties that turned the folk world on its ear. There are no "highlights" here; it's all insanely good.

MAY

MONTH NO. 5 kicked off with a generally underrated record, *The Top*, by **the Cure;** Robert Smith's guitar work on "The Caterpillar" and "Bananafishbones" is memorable and worth a revisit. On the same day (May 4), we got *Ocean Rain* by **Echo & the Bunnymen**. If you've seen *Donnie Darko*, you probably know "The Killing Moon," with its plucky, off-kilter licks courtesy of Will Sergeant and Ian McCulloch, but have you heard their cover of "All You Need Is Love?" Probably not, as it was a B-side. Right around the same time, **David Gilmour** released his second solo album, *About Face*, which was partially recorded at Pink Floyd's old haunt (London's Abbey Road

made good use of rhythmic delay, and the studio's EMT plate reverb was employed tastefully on that song as well as "Girl Gone Bad" and "House of Pain." However Ed's usual MXR flanger and phase shifter pedals are absent.

MINISTRY OF TRUTH

The finished product exceeded all expectations and then some. *1984* was a document of a band at its prime, where years of relentless touring had made their sound tight and their improvisational communication almost psychic. Ed's songwriting talents had expanded and grown, with his knack for pop hooks balanced by ambitious excursions inspired by progressive rock and fusion jazz.

Perhaps the most surprising element of *1984* is the fact that the first note of guitar is heard after more than two minutes have passed. This was partly the result of Templeman's late comment that he wished the album had a song called "1984." Landee realized that he had about 45 minutes of Ed improvising solo on the Oberheim that could be edited down to an instrumental intro, and *voila*! He had his wish. The "1984" synth instrumental made the perfect dramatic statement and lead in to "Jump."

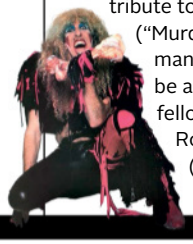
"Jump" was pure pop perfection that fit right in with the synth-crazy mid-Eighties, but Ed's dynamic guitar solo was the secret weapon behind its success, giving Van Halen a competitive crossover advantage with a hard rock audience that would never be caught dead listening to groups like the Human League, Depeche Mode or Soft Cell. "Panama" may be the ultimate classic Van Halen tune, with Roth's raunchy "fast car and faster girl" lyrics perfectly capturing the So Cal party vibe that made the band so irresistible from day one. It's also one of two songs on *1984* that were inspired by AC/DC, which was not a bad move considering how *Back in Black* had already become the best-selling hard rock album of all-time.

The infectious, bouncy energy of "Top Jimmy" made it a strong contender for a fifth single or at least a hell of a B-side. However, it was probably held back by the difficulty of switching from open D7 tuning to standard for the solo's delirious whammy bar workout, which prevented Van Halen from ever performing the song live. "Drop Dead Legs" similarly should have been a hit, partly thanks to its relentless pile-driving Michael Anthony/Alex Van Halen rhythm section groove. "That was inspired by 'Black in Black,'" Ed admitted. "I was grooving to that beat, although 'Drop Dead Legs' is slower. Whatever I listen to somehow is filtered through me and comes out differently. It's almost a jazz version of 'Back in Black' — I put a lot more notes in there." It was never played live until the final 2015 tour.

"Jump" and its supporting music video may have made Van Halen seem harmless and cuddly, but "Hot for

Eddie Van Halen and Valerie Bertinelli share a quiet moment backstage at the Monsters of Rock festival in the U.K., August 18, 1984

Studios), features lyrics by Pete Townshend ("Love on the Air," "All Lovers Are Deranged"), a tribute to John Lennon ("Murder") and what many consider to be a mini dig at fellow Floyd'er Roger Waters ("You Know I'm Right").



On May 10, **Twisted Sister** made it out of the shadows of the Long Island club scene and hit it big with *Stay Hungry*, which features a glorious pic of Dee Snider chewing on a gnarly bone on the cover. It also features not one, but two mega-hits in "I Wanna Rock" and "We're Not Gonna Take It," not to mention some tasty, hyper-melodic solos from Jay Jay French and Eddie Ojeda.

Steve Ray Vaughan released *Couldn't Stand the Weather* on the 15th. SRV had been drawing plenty of Hendrix comparisons for years, so it was fitting that he finally committed to tape — and to some, created the definitive version of — Jimi's "Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)." SRV was the star of another '84 album, the live *Blues Explosion*, which was recorded at the 1982 Montreux Jazz Fest. Besides Stevie's excellent 10-minute version of "Texas Flood" (famously witnessed by David Bowie), there's **Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson's** smoking version of Rufus Thomas' "Walking the Dog." BTW, Johnson had his own album in '84, *Doin' the Sugar Too*, which

Teacher" was the opposite, exposing the band as the bad boy party animals they really were. Alex Van Halen's galloping Simmons drum intro sounds like a nitro-fueled dragster revving up before he switches to a Billy Cobham-meets-Buddy Rich swing that pushes Ed's hot rodded tapping into overdrive. Roth's schoolboy-in-heat lyrics are downright horny and given extra punch and verve by Anthony's high-pitched harmonies, while Ed keeps things loose and raunchy with ZZ Top-inspired bluesy finger-plucked riffs.

"I'll Wait" was the album's other synth-driven hit, with the yin of Ed's sophisticated keyboard chords and a chorus with smooth yacht-rock lyrics penned by the Doobie Brothers' Michael McDonald counterbalanced by the yang of Roth's semi-goofball rants about "heartbreak in overdrive" and "such good photography!" The guitar solo similarly provides a contrast between Ed's melodic phrasing and fusion-esque flourishes with explosive vibrato bar noise.

When the album's final sequence was being prepared in late 1983, no one had any inkling that the band's classic era with David Lee Roth would soon come to a close, yet the final two songs on *1984* delivered about as perfect a send-off as any fan could ask for. "Girl Gone Bad" is simply epic and the closest thing to a progressive rock song that the band ever recorded. Ed delivered a tour-de-force performance with dynamic shifts in emotion from elegiac tapped harmonics to dark, drama-filled riffs. This was Van Halen's equivalent to Led Zeppelin's "Achilles Last Stand" with the added bonus of a truly blazing Van Halen solo heavily inspired by Allan Holdsworth.

Dating back to Van Halen's early club days (demos were recorded in 1976 with Gene Simmons and in early 1977 for Warner Bros.), "House of Pain" was the only song not completely written fresh for the album, although the only element that remained from the early versions was the song's main riff. "I guess nobody really liked it the way that it originally was," Ed said. "The intro and verses are completely different, and the fast part in the middle for the solo and the groove at the end are almost like entirely new songs." "House of Pain" showed that Van Halen had grown and evolved considerably over the preceding seven to eight years without losing any of their hunger, intensity and power.

GIN-SCENTED TEARS

All good things must come to an end. They were too good to last. Always leave the people wanting more. These may be overused clichés, but it's difficult to think of better ways to describe the aftermath of the *1984* album, its ambitious supporting tour and the eventual breakup of Van Halen's classic David Lee Roth lineup.

Did success spoil Van Halen? Yes, and no. Eddie Van Halen's ever-growing musical ambitions and desire to pursue different sonic paths collided with David Lee Roth's incessant adoration of the spotlight and aspirations to pursue a career as a movie star. With two diametrically opposed forces in conflict, the tensions inevitably sucked all the air out of the room until no one could comfortably breathe. Trying to outdo *1984*'s success would have been an unfathomable challenge for any band, so it sadly made sense for Van Halen to end that chapter at the top of their game.

Van Halen fans both new and old maybe didn't get exactly what they wanted, but instead they got what they needed. The Van Halen brothers and Anthony joined forces with Sammy Hagar and his growing legion of fans to take the band in a different and arguably more progressive direction it couldn't have tried with Roth. *5150* didn't reach the staggering commercial sales heights of *1984*, but it became Van Halen's third all-time best-selling album with 6x Platinum certification. It was also the first Van Halen album to finally reach the #1 spot on the charts. [1984 *likely also would have achieved that feat, but it had the disadvantage of going head-to-head with the best-selling album of all-time, Michael Jackson's* Thriller, *which was in the beginning of several extended periods where it completely dominated the charts for several months.*]

Meanwhile Roth put together one of rock's greatest super groups, recruiting the extraordinary talents of guitarist Steve Vai, bassist Billy Sheehan and drummer Gregg Bissonette to keep the rip-roaring party going full blast. Roth's first full-length album *Eat 'Em and Smile* was nowhere near as commercially successful as the albums he recorded with Van Halen, but with Vai and Sheehan's instrumental pyrotechnics and Roth's inimitable character it kept the white-hot flame burning very brightly for classic Van Halen fans.

The split resulted in a Dave vs. Sammy argument as incessant as it is meaningless. For some fans, the change truly was the best of both worlds, but it didn't last. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. Van Halen had won the victory over itself. GW

Judas Priest

Defenders of the Faith

The two-guitar attack wasn't a new idea when Glenn Tipton and K.K. Downing came together in the Seventies, but they sure did perfect it. By the time *Defenders of the Faith* dropped in January, Downing's aggressive flash and Tipton's blues-based licks were on full display. Cuts like "Freewheel Burning" and "Some Heads Are Gonna Roll" would define Priest's mid-Eighties era. But they found themselves in hot water, as "Eat Me Alive," which features a blistering mid-song solo by Downing and some nifty shredhead antics by Tipton to close it out, landed at Number 3 on the Parents Music Resource Center's (Tipper Gore's troop) "Filthy Fifteen." — *Andrew Daly*

ERICA ECHENBERG/REDFERNS

continued on page 58

spotlights his minimalist, fat-toned Strat solos. The star of the show is "I Need Some Air."

Nearing the end of the month, **the Bangles'** *All Over the Place* reminded us of how cool Vicki Peterson and Susanna Hoffs were; **Lita Ford** cemented herself as a badass woman of shred with *Dancin' on the Edge;* and on the 29th, courtesy of Jeff Beck and David T. Walker, **Tina Turner's** *Private Dancer* turned out to be a low-key guitar buffet. And let us not forget jazzer **Lee Ritenour's** impressive *Banded Together*, which is arguably more rock than jazz ("I'm Not Responsible"), and **Ini Kamoze's** self-titled debut album, a 31-minute affair featuring the tight reggae punch of guitarist Willie Lindo and bassist Robbie Shakespeare. Interestingly, on some tracks, Shakespeare is doing that "ever so slightly flat but still considered 'in tune'" thing that we hear on Bob Marley's "Stir It Up."

Jeff Beck kept himself busy in '84, with guest appearances with Tina Turner, Rod Stewart, Box of Frogs and the Honeydrippers

JUNE

JUNE GOT OFF to a flashy start with **Bruce Springsteen's** *Born in the U.S.A.* To be sure, the Boss, with his iconic Fender

1984

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

Couldn't Stand the Weather

TOMMY SHANNON AND CHRIS LAYTON RECALL THE MAKING OF SRV'S GARGANTUAN SECOND ALBUM

By Alan Paul

Stevie Ray Vaughan backstage in Royal Oak, Michigan, September 8, 1984

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN and Double Trouble — drummer Chris Layton and bassist Tommy Shannon — faced the classic second-album conundrum at the end of 1983. They needed new material quickly, coming off the road from a year of extensive international touring behind *Texas Flood*, a debut album that included the highlights of their excellent live shows. "We didn't have all of these songs floating around for most of the band's life as we did the first time," Shannon says. "We had to start from scratch."

The band spent three weeks doing pre-production in an Austin studio writing and recording demos. The excellent outtakes released in later years highlight both the band's strong playing and the need for new tunes, as they were largely playing the music of others, including Jimi Hendrix ("Little Wing"), Lonnie Mack ("Wham!"), Muddy Waters (Willie Dixon's "Close to You"), Earl King ("Come On (Pt. III)"), Freddie King ("Hideaway") and Hound Dog Taylor ("Give Me Back My Wig.")

Purple Rain

Tele in hand, and Steven Van Zandt, with his Strat, delivered the goods on "Born in the U.S.A.," "Glory Days" and "Dancin' in the Dark." Not to be outdone, **Prince** had his own mega-album, *Purple Rain*, in stores by the 25th. Tunes such as "Purple Rain," "When Doves Cry" and "Darling Nikki" showed his virtuosity, not to mention Wendy Melvoin's skills as a rhythm player.

For the most part, **Rod Stewart's** *Camouflage* is just another Eighties album in a raging river of Eighties albums — except that it happens to feature Stewart's old Jeff Beck Group bandmate — literally Jeff Beck himself — on guitar on three key tracks, including the album's hit, "Infatuation." Beck's fretwork turned up again (it was a busy year for him) on a little something called *Box of Frogs*, a Yardbirds reunion album of sorts that was helmed by his former Yardbirds bandmates Chris Dreja, Paul Samwell-Smith and Jim McCarty, who now called themselves — you guessed it — **Box of Frogs**.

While we're at it, **Jefferson Starship** released *Nuclear Furniture*, one in a long series of albums that spotlighted their fleet-fingered (and perfectly cast for the time) lead guitarist, Craig Chaquico, co-writer (with Mickey Thomas) of "Layin' It on the Line." Up next came *In the Studio* by **the Specials**, aka the Special AKA, a

"WE HAD TO **COME UP WITH SONGS PRETTY QUICKLY.** STEVIE WASN'T A FLUENT SONGWRITER"

TOMMY SHANNON

One song fell into Stevie's lap when he saw Mike Kindred, a bandmate in the short-lived Triple Threat Revue, who gave him a cassette of "Cold Shot," the song the pianist wrote and sang in their former band. At the sessions the group wrote "Couldn't Stand the Weather," "Stang's Swang," "Honey Bee" and "Scuttle Buttin'," the scorching instrumental, which Vaughan's brother Jimmie notes was inspired by Mack's "Chicken Pickin'."

"We had to come up with the songs pretty quickly," Shannon says. "Stevie wasn't a fluent songwriter; he'd spend a lot of time on a song. 'Couldn't Stand the Weather' came together over time. We worked through it in rehearsals and gradually put all the sections together. "

The song, which would become the album's title track, was inspired by Cutter Brandenburg, the group's initial road manager and first true believer. A childhood friend of Stevie's, it was Brandenburg who helped transform Little Stevie into Stevie Ray Vaughan, encouraging him to use his full name, to wear the black hat and to adopt a consistent persona. Brandenburg had quit on the flight back from a European tour in August 1983, upset by Vaughan's growing alcohol and drug intake and terrified that he was watching his friend slowly kill himself.

"I was becoming disenchanted because I just knew this band was headed for a brick wall and I wasn't sure whether I could watch it happen," Brandenburg said. When people would ask Vaughan what happened between them, Brandenburg added, Stevie would answer, "He couldn't stand the weather."

With five songs mostly ready to record, the band entered New York's Power Station in January 1984. Richard Mullen was there as engineer and co-producer, the same roles he played on *Texas Flood*, while John Hammond, the Columbia Records legend who had signed Vaughan, was there as executive producer.

"What an honor to work with that guy," Shannon says of Hammond, whose signings had included Billie Holiday, Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan and Charlie Christian. "In every generation, he found something spectacular."

"On the very first day, Richard asked us to play something so he could get sounds, so I did the floor tom drum roll that starts 'Tin Pan Alley,' and Stevie and Tommy just fell in," Layton says. "When we were done, John said, 'You'll never get it better than that!' It was a warm up, but he was right; that's the track we kept."

The band members were living large, with a big budget and rooms at the Mayflower Hotel, overlooking Central Park. They were in "party down" mode, recalls Layton, with one problem. "We felt like we couldn't do drugs in front of John Hammond, so we'd sneak off behind the Steinway piano or a sound baffle. But he knew what we were up to."

"We couldn't have been more obvious," Shannon adds.

Jimmie Vaughan came to the studio and played rhythm guitar on "Couldn't Stand the Weather" and a cover of Guitar Slim's "The Things (That) I Used to Do" in one afternoon. He was joined by most of his Fabulous Thunderbirds bandmates, and drummer Fran Christina played on "Stang's Swang" because Layton was passed out on the studio couch at the time.

Layton was sleeping on the couch at 4 a.m. another morning, when Vaughan woke him up to get behind the drums and record "Cold Shot." That first take appears on the album, though they had barely rehearsed the song, and it had no definitive arrangement. Layton laughs recounting that "drummers have always asked me how I got that super-laid back, in-the-pocket feel. Well... Stevie didn't sing even a scratch vocal, and it was the first time we'd ever played the song beginning to end. I've always wondered if it would have been better if I was really rested and had known the arrangement!"

Another highlight of *Couldn't Stand the Weather* is Vaughan's cover of "Voodoo Chile" — and he had to be talked into doing it by Shannon, the biggest booster of Stevie letting his Hendrix flag fly.

"He needed encouragement to pursue what was in his heart, and 'Voodoo Chile' was our point of departure into the future," Shannon says. "It felt like breaking out of jail. Stevie played the song with so much soul and spirit. That take was live from beginning to end, seven minutes of pure guitar energy without a single miscue."

Vaughan played his trusty Number One Strat on most of the album. "He had the most authority and best sound on it," Mullen said. "It always had a huge tone whether he slammed it or picked it gently."

The album's basic tracks were recorded live, with Vaughan standing next to Layton's drums in the main room. His amps were in a large isolation booth, with a sliding glass door often left open.

"I always tried to allow Stevie to play without headphones, so he would be just as animated as he was in his live performances," Mullen said. "He danced around, slidin' across the room on his toes."

Couldn't Stand the Weather was released May 15, 1984, and turned out to be an immediate hit, selling 250,000 copies in only its first three weeks in stores.

"After the release, we hit the road with all of these new, fresh songs no one had ever heard, which was great," Layton says. The album solidified Stevie Ray's standing as a guitar icon and proved to any doubters that this was no one-hit wonder.

Adapted from Texas Flood: The Inside Story of Stevie Ray Vaughan, *by Alan Paul and Andy Aledort.*

ROSS MARINO/GETTY IMAGES

continued on page 60

moniker the U.K. ska-meisters used for just this one album. Regardless of what you call them, there's more than enough of John Shipley's tasteful playing to go around. The same can be said for the amazing John Scofield, whose blazing, angular fretwork adorns **Miles Davis'** June offering, *Decoy* (and don't even get us started on all the cool stuff bassist Darryl "The Munch" Jones is doing on this record).

JULY

AS THE SUMMER raged on, Minnesota's **Hüsker Dü** released their double album *Zen Arcade*, putting Bob Mould's genius on display, and on the 2nd, **Dio** dropped *The Last in Line*, continuing his success on the strength of Vivian Campbell's mighty chops. Just a day later, **Minutemen** released their opus, *Double Nickels on the Dime*, which found D. Boon scattering abrasive punk licks across 44 tracks in 81 minutes. Meanwhile, Christian rockers **Stryper** released their debut EP, *The Yellow and Black Attack*, on the 21st. Right out of the gate, Oz Fox made his shreddy presence known on "Loud 'N' Clear."

In early July, Dio released *The Last in Line*, continuing his success on the strength of Vivian Campbell's mighty chops

1984

RUSH

Grace Under Pressure

[*from left*] Rush's Alex Lifeson, Neil Peart and Geddy Lee work on the music video for "The Body Electric." Lifeson is playing his Hentor Sportcaster, which is referenced in our Lifeston/Lerxst feature on page 32

ALEX LIFESON RECALLS THE MAKING OF THE BAND'S "REALLY DIFFICULT" 10TH ALBUM

By Richard Bienstock

NINETY-EIGHTY-FOUR saw Rush release their 10th studio album in as many years. But while the trio — guitarist Alex Lifeson, bassist, keyboardist and singer Geddy Lee and drummer and lyricist Neil Peart — were firmly established as rock superstars, they were also in some ways operating as a newborn act, exploring uncharted, sometimes, uneasy rock territory.

Following the massive mainstream success of 1981's *Moving Pictures*, which spawned now-classic singles like "Limelight," Freewill" and "Tom Sawyer," the band took a hard turn on the next year's *Signals*, which pushed synthesizers to the forefront, relegating Lifeson's guitar to a less central and more supportive role.

"*Signals* was a weird record for me — I liked the songs, but I thought it was a little weak in tonality," Lifeson tells *Guitar World*. "Keyboards started coming up a lot more and so there was a little more of a fight for space with the guitar, which would continue with some of the following records." The band's next album, *Grace Under Pressure*, "was kind of a response to *Signals*," Lifeson says, "and it became more of a guitar record."

"KEYBOARDS STARTED COMING UP A LOT MORE, AND SO THERE WAS A LITTLE **MORE OF A FIGHT FOR SPACE WITH THE GUITAR**"

Indeed, while *Grace Under Pressure*, released April 12, 1984, still sounds closer to the synthy, heavily processed sound of *Signals* than the rock anthems of *Moving Pictures*, Lifeson's guitar is more present throughout, spiking the tracks with driving riffs and slashing chord work, and infusing songs like "Afterimage," "Between the Wheels" and "The Body Electric" with characteristic hot-wired solos. "I think 'The Body Electric' is my favorite song from the record," Lifeson says. "I really liked the solo on that one."

Gear-wise, Lifeson employed a combination of Marshall and Carvin amps in the studio and relied heavily on a Loft digital delay unit and a DeltaLab HarmoniCom-

And then there was **Sammy Hagar**, who went full Red Rocker with *VOA* on the 23rd, AKA the album with "I Can't Drive 55." That was a tough act to follow, but no matter, as mighty **Metallica** unleashed *Ride the Lightning* on the 27th. With hours of tutelage from Joe Satriani under his belt, guitarist Kirk Hammett was ready to shred, and he did so in unison with James Hetfield on "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "Fade to Black."

Meanwhile in Texas, **Pantera** dropped their second album, *Projects in the Jungle*, on the 27th. Although the future metal monsters weren't quite "themselves" just yet (there's definitely still some glam going on, plus Terry Glaze was still at the mic), the Abbott brothers — Diamond Darrell and Vinnie Paul — were in fine form, as was Rex Brown, who was still calling himself Rex Rocker. From a guitar standpoint, the focal point is "Blue Light Turnin' Red," which shows off the future Dimebag's ferocious chops, not to mention his insanely obvious Eddie Van Halen influence. On the same day,

The guitar highpoint of Pantera's 1984 album is "Blue Light Turnin' Red," which clearly displays the influence of Eddie Van Halen

The Pretenders

Learning to Crawl

The stakes were high when The Pretenders released *Learning to Crawl*, their first album since the untimely deaths of guitarist James Honeyman-Scott and bass player Pete Farndon. Of course, Chrissie Hynde's unique vocal qualities ensured that there was never any doubt that whatever they came up with, it'd always sound like a Pretenders' record. Given that the previous two albums were pretty much flawless, there were undoubtedly questions as to whether the new album would measure up. The lead single, "Back on the Chain Gang," featured Rockpile guitarist Billy Bremner on temporary six-string duties. Bremner was clearly channeling the essence of Honeyman-Scott — if you didn't know otherwise, you'd swear it was a lost outtake from the band's first album. Robbie McIntosh (later a member of Paul McCartney's band) took the guitar spot for the rest of the album, remaining with them for four years. Any notion of a mini crisis was soon forgotten once the album was released. Featuring three further hit singles, including perennial Christmas favorite, "2000 Miles," it rapidly became their most successful record. — *Mark McStea*

Johnny Copeland

Texas Twister

Stevie Ray Vaughan wasn't the only Texas twister to leave his mark on 1984's fertile blues landscape. It turns out Johnny Copeland — who was born in Louisiana but moved to Houston when he was knee-high to an armadillo — delivered one of the year's strongest trad-blues albums. Coincidentally, it did happen to feature SRV on a pair of tracks, one of which ("When the Rain Starts Fallin'") disappeared when Rounder reissued the album in 1986. Anyway, it's nice that SRV is there and all, but let us not forget Copeland's masterful playing throughout this unassuming record, not to mention the wide range of tones he could wring out of his Peavey T-60. — *Damian Fanelli*

puter harmonizer (which you can hear it on "Distant Early Warning" and "Red Sector A"), among other effects. His main guitars for the sessions, which took place at Le Studio in Quebec, were his white Hentor Sportscaster, as well as another Strat similarly modified with a humbucker in the bridge position, along with his trusty Gibson ES-355. "I liked the combination of the 355 double-tracking with a Tele or a Strat — something a little wiry, with a different character," he says. "That was sort of my go-to."

Despite the high quality of the songs and performances, Lifeson concedes that *Grace Under Pressure* was a "really hard" record to make. "We started working on it with [*producer*] Steve Lillywhite," he says. "We approached him on the previous tour and we agreed to work together on *Grace Under Pressure*. But then literally last minute we got a call from his management and they said, 'Steve's taken another project. He won't be doing your project.' That really left us in a lurch."

In a pinch, the band went searching for a new producer and landed on Peter Henderson, who had worked with Jeff Beck, Paul McCartney and Wings, Supertramp and others. "Peter had a good track record, but while he was qualified, he just didn't seem to be focused," Lifeson says. "That left it up to the three of us to really focus on production. We like to work with a producer that's sort of like the fourth wheel, where we do what we do and they add just a little bit of direction and deal with some of the stuff we don't want to deal with. That way we can focus directly on the music. But that wasn't quite the case. I remember we were at Le Studio and it was a very, very cold winter. The record took a long time to make and it was really, really difficult."

That said, he adds, "When it was all said and done we were quite proud of it. I like the tone of the record. I like the songs on that record. I think that it was a progression from the previous records, and that's what we always wanted to achieve." Throughout Rush's decades together, Lifeson continues, "We always wanted to move forward. With *Grace Under Pressure* we certainly did."

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

continued on page 62

Quiet Riot released *Condition Critical*. It was the band's second album with Carlos Cavazo, whose distinctive shredding skills were put to great use from lead-off track "Sign of the Times" onwards. He even wound up on our December 1984 cover.

AUGUST

IN THE MONTH'S earliest hours, U.K. rockers **Red Guitars** (look 'em up!) released the underrated *Slow to Fade* on their own Self Drive label. "Marimba Jive," riding high on Hallam Lewis and John Rowley's angular axes, spent six months on the U.K. indie charts. Meanwhile, fans of **the Fixx** enjoyed a heaped helping of fiery fretwork from James West-Oram courtesy of *Phantoms* (check out "Sunshine in the Shade").

On the 2nd, Tommy Thayer's pre-Kiss band, **Black 'N Blue**, released their self-titled debut, featuring fun-in-the-sun cuts "Hold On to 18" and "Chains Around Heaven." Although not too many people were paying attention just yet, **Red Hot Chili Peppers** released their self-titled debut album. Their guitarist at this time was Jack Sherman, who handled six-string duties between founding guitarist Hillel Slovak's departure and eventual return. A bit more noticed was **Psychedelic Furs'** *Mirror Moves* (home of hits like

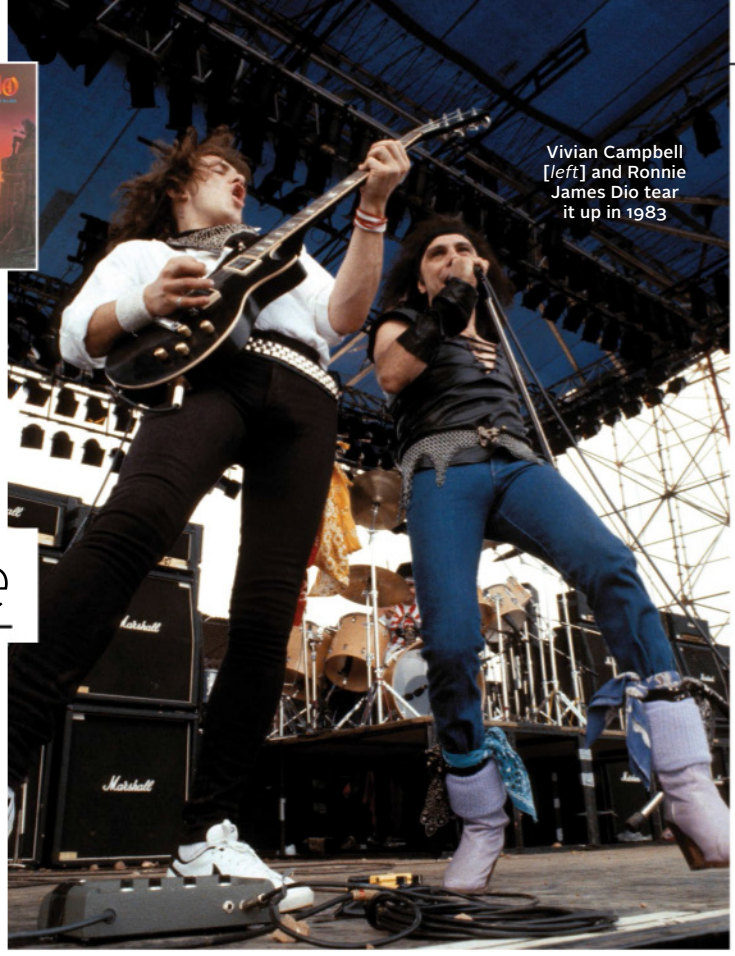
1984

DIO

The Last in Line

VIVIAN CAMPBELL LOOKS BACK ON THE FIRST DIO ALBUM TO GO PLATINUM — AND THE SOLOING TIPS HE PICKED UP FROM HIS BOSS

By Mark McStea



Vivian Campbell [*left*] and Ronnie James Dio tear it up in 1983

PETE CRONIN/REDFERNS

RECORDED IN THE spring of 1984 at Caribou Ranch studios, way up in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, expectations around Dio's second album — aka the follow-up to 1983's *Holy Diver*, a worldwide smash hit — ran about as high as the Rocky Mountains themselves. In the end, *The Last in Line*, released in early July of 1984, turned out to be the band's highest charting album, with the single of the same name even breaking into *Billboard's* Top 10.

"We stayed at Caribou Ranch for the duration of the sessions, and we'd eat together in a mess hall," says guitarist Vivian Campbell, who had also worked on *Holy Diver*. "It was a focused environment that enabled us to do some great creative work." According to Campbell, the writing process was collaborative, with the band creating songs together in rehearsals prior to the recording sessions. Of the album's nine tracks, seven are co-credited to band members, including Campbell (six songs), bassist Jimmy Bain (five) and drummer Vinny Appice (four). Of course, there's the case of the album's beloved opener, "We Rock," which was created on the spot in the studio.

"Vinny had a beat, Ronnie hummed a bit of a melody, I worked out the chords and riff and we were away in no time at all," Campbell says. "As was typical with Ronnie, I wasn't surprised to see that I didn't get a writing credit. I was in my early twenties back then, and I felt very sheepish about asking for my due."

Speaking of youth, Campbell occasionally found himself at odds with his boss's perspective. "Because I was so much younger than Ronnie, I'd look at bands like Ratt, Van Halen and Dokken and think they seemed so much looser and were having more fun than we were. They didn't take themselves as seriously as Ronnie, who was rooted in Seventies classic heavy metal. I was thinking we were a little out of step at the time. At our first photo shoot, Ronnie asked me why I was smiling — and then he told me not to." [*Laughs*]

Campbell's playing with Dio — particularly on *The Last in Line*'s multifaceted title track — brought him plaudits aplenty back in the day, none of which hurt his chances of joining Whitesnake, Lou Gramm's band and, most famously, Def Leppard.

"Ronnie gave me great advice about building a guitar solo with memorable lines — and not overplaying," he concludes. "I appreciated that guidance; if left to my own devices, it would have been a case of how many fucking notes I could fit in. [*Laughs*] When we do 'The Last in Line' and 'We Rock' with my Last In Line side band, I always play the solos exactly the same as when I recorded them, which I never did at the time. Re-learning them gave me an appreciation for my playing back then, which I never had when I used to hear them on the radio, back when I used to think my playing sucked..." [*Laughs*]

continued on page 64

"Heaven" and some fine playing by the underrated John Ashton), **W.A.S.P.'s** self-titled debut and **Y&T's** *In Rock We Trust*.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER BROUGHT A torrent of records, the first being **Iron Maiden's** *Powerslave*, which dropped on the 3rd, treating fans to the double-barreled theatrics of Dave Murray and Adrian Smith on "Aces High," "2 Minutes to Midnight" and the nearly 14-minute epic, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." And then there was **Dokken,** who on the 14th released *Tooth and Nail*, a career-saving effort that found George Lynch sullenly shredding on "Alone Again" while wallowing in Dokken's drugged-out dysfunction.

Speaking of druggy dysfunction, one day later, on the 15th, Shane MacGowan's troupe, **the Pogues**, released *Red Roses for Me*, blending traditional Irish folk with post-punk. **Jethro Tull** delivered *Under Wraps* on the 7th. Lyrically and melodically it's a solid album, although it's often considered a vehicle to showcase Peter-John Vettese's keyboard skills and Ian Anderson's interest in technology. Martin Barre's guitars aren't absent in any way, but they definitely share the spotlight with, um, those keyboards.

Ten days later, **Kiss** released *Animalize*,

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1984

Iron Maiden's Dave Murray [*left*] and Adrian Smith on stage in Chicago, June 16, 1985

IRON MAIDEN

Powerslave

ADRIAN SMITH REVISITS THE RIFFS, SOLOS AND WRITING PROCESS BEHIND THE BAND'S MOST EPIC ALBUM (WHICH LED TO AN EVEN MORE EPIC TOUR)

By Andrew Daly

GOING INTO 1984, Iron Maiden were on the precipice. They'd gone from a raggedy-assed quasi-punk outfit posing as a metal outfit to a certifiable powerhouse bursting with pomp and circumstance. Part of that shift was due to Adrian Smith, who, after replacing Dennis Stratton in 1980, cozied up alongside holdover Dave Murray. It was all too easy, as Smith, like Murray, was a real-deal gunslinger who got off on plugging his ax directly into a Marshall and diming it.

Smith's blues-inspired, gentle arpeggios and modal stylings were the proverbial yin to Murray's Hendrix-worshiping, legato yang. They'd rattled off two albums together, *Killers* (1981), *The Number of the Beast* (1982) and *Piece of Mind* (1983), that proved it. But now it was time to firmly cement themselves as halcyon greats.

And so, after Christmas of '83, Maiden hauled ass to the Channel Islands in Britain to begin writing their fifth album, *Powerslave*, with world domination on the brain. The pressure was surely ratcheted up, but if that bothered Smith, he doesn't let on. "As far as our intent, it was still about the song," Smith tells *Guitar World*. "We'd just write the song, and then Dave and I would worry about the solos after."

Despite Smith's oversimplification, solos were critical. On *Powerslave*, there are 14: seven by Smith and seven by Murray. With those solos came dueling harmonies and raging bravado, but perhaps unsurprisingly, little thought was put into it. "Dave and I rarely spoke about it," Smith says. "I'd started writing more, but Steve wrote many of the harmonies. Steve wrote the harmony sections on 'Aces High,' which was typical. When I'd write, I never had harmony guitars; I arrived at things differently. So it came down to Dave and I knowing each other rather than talking."

Murray and Smith never riffed harder or soloed more melodically than on *Powerslave*, where guitar magic was conjured, secret sauces were crafted and Kool-Aid was drunk. Of course, with a guitar-loving producer like Martin Birch twirling the knobs at Compass Point Studios, that was never in doubt. "Martin worked with all the giants," Smith says. "When he suggested something, you took notice."

As for how Birch impacted him directly, Smith says, "Considering all he'd done, it was a matter of trying to impress him and wanting to do a good job. You were probably doing pretty well if he thought highly of you."

With the heroics heard on songs like "2 Minutes to Midnight," Powerslave" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," odds are that Birch was indeed impressed. But even if he wasn't, there was an unexpected guest who was. "As we were working on *Powerslave*, AC/DC came into the studio to work on their new album. I remember Bruce [*Dickinson*] and I got to talking with Brian Johnson, and we played him the final version of '2 Minutes to Midnight.' He seemed quite impressed. Brian seemed very positive about it, but maybe he was just being polite!"

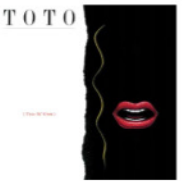
Johnson aside, "2 Minutes to Midnight" is a rager featuring Murray showing their guitar-related dysfunction as they struggled with an ailing Mark St. John, who gave way to Bruce Kulick. Welsh guitar great (and former Love Sculpture and Rockpile man) **Dave Edmunds** teamed up with ELO's Jeff Lynne for *Riff Raff*, which is a little synthy but still captures a bit of Edmunds' rootsy flair ("Can't Get Enough"). And speaking of roots (or at least old-timey rock 'n' roll), September 24 brought us *The Honeydrippers: Volume One*, a hit EP by former Led Zep man Robert Plant and his part-time pickup band, **the Honeydrippers**. The record features memorable solos by Jimmy Page ("Sea of Love," "I Get a Thrill") and Jeff Beck ("I Got a Woman," "Rockin' at Midnight").

Dave Edmunds teamed up with ELO's Jeff Lynne for *Riff Raff*, which is a little synthy but still captures a bit of Edmunds' rootsy flair

A bit later in the month, Carlos Alomar lent his licks to songs like "Blue Jean" and "Loving the Alien" from **David Bowie's** *Tonight*, which was released just two days before young metalheads **Armored Saint** gave us *March of the Saint*, an album that cost $300,000, a sum the band (supposedly) has never paid back! And let us not forget one of the greatest live albums

Toto

Isolation



Coming off 1982's *Toto IV*, which featured cuts like "Rosanna," "Africa," "I Won't Hold You Back" and "Waiting for Your Love," Steve Lukather had a lot to live up to. So, for Toto's follow-up, *Isolation*, primarily due to *Toto IV*'s success, Lukather knew he had to push the envelope. "I was given free rein and was allowed to fuck around," he says. "I got away from the 'Les Paul into a Marshall' stuff and went out of my way to get weird, avoid pentatonic shit and make every solo different with layering — especially with my Beatles-type stuff I did with sounds."

Lukather had just wrapped a guest spot with Paul McCartney on his 1984 album, *Give My Regards to Broad Street*, so the Fab Four vibes must have been flowing. Released October 18, *Isolation* would earn another Gold medal for Toto, and although they're considered deep cuts today, true Toto fans love tracks like "Stranger in Town," "Holyanna" and "Angel Don't Cry." — *Andrew Daly*

"AS WE WERE WORKING ON *POWERSLAVE*, **AC/DC CAME INTO THE STUDIO** TO WORK ON THEIR NEW ALBUM"

ADRIAN SMITH

and Smith peeling off righteous solos. Smith says the song "originated from a demo done on a four-track recorder." Then there was "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which Smith says was "recorded in sections, as we couldn't play it all the way through because it was 13 minutes long."

But neither of those tracks stood out like "Powerslave" did for Smith, who laughs, saying, "I remember doing the solo for 'Powerslave.' I was *extremely* hungover. We were a bunch of young guys, and we'd go out at night and party *very* hard. We were out until three in the morning, and I went home thinking, 'We're not working tomorrow, we've gone too hard.' But at 10 in the morning, Martin — who partied harder than any of us — called me into the studio, and he was sitting there with Robert Palmer — the 'Addicted to Love' guy. He had me sit at the desk and do the solo. I was really in pain, but I pulled it off. Funnily, it's my favorite."

Of the seven solos Smith signed his signature to, of note is the sweet yet rage-filled tone he harnessed, which shockingly, he did without much help. "I was using Lado [*Earth*] guitars," he says. "All I paired them with was a 100-watt Marshall and maybe an [*Ibanez*] Tube Screamer. Believe it or not, that was it as far as the guitar sound of *Powerslave* goes."

Despite the partying, AC/DC intrusions and hungover solos — and before the world would see to it that *Powerslave* would race to Number 21 on the *Billboard* 200 and go platinum — the vibe at Compass Point was that Maiden were sitting on a stunner. Even an overly critical guy like Smith knew it. "I just plowed ahead and played my guitar," he says. "I didn't think about it, but knew we had something. I was too close to it. I knew it was good, but there was no being objective."

With 40 years having passed and the wounds of self-analysis closed, Smith offers up his final word on *Powerslave*, that album that put Maiden on the map. "It was important," he says. "We were out for 13 months supporting it, and maybe that was too much. That affected Bruce badly. Singing for 13 months straight was hellish. We had no life other than touring for *Powerslave*. I wasn't married, I had no kids, but I needed a break. The whole process pushed a few people over the edge.

"Don't get me wrong — we had good times, and *Powerslave* was important, but in the end, it was a bit too much, which led to a lot of changes after."

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

continued on page 43

of the Eighties, **Talking Heads'** *Stop Making Sense*. One of its many highlights is an extra-funky version of "Slippery People," which is powered by the guitars of David Byrne and Alex Weir (Jerry Harrison is tinkling the ivories on this tune). Which brings us to *Bewitched*, the second album by **Andy Summers & Robert Fripp**. Although definitely keyboard heavy, this batch of instrumentals shoots for a fun (sometimes even danceable) vibe and features some interesting interplay between two undisputed tone pioneers. Some sections of the album even sound a bit like Fripp's later "Soundscapes" solo performances.

OCTOBER

OCTOBER KICKED LISTENERS in the teeth with **the Ramones'** *Too Tough to Die*, which found Johnny Ramone leaning toward heavy-metal riffage rather than the proto-pop punk downstrokes he was known for. On the same day (October 1), we got **Joan Jett's** raucous — and kinda timeless-sounding — *Glorious Results of a Misspent Youth*, home of "Cherry Bomb" and Ricky Byrd's wall-of-dirt riffs and bendy solos. It was in stark contrast to **U2,** who on the same day, released *The Unforgettable Fire*, a Brian Eno-produced classic featuring the Edge's iconic licks across songs like "Pride (in the Name of Love)" and "4th of July." Meanwhile, **Ricky Skaggs'** *Country Boy* shot out of the gate with its blazing

1984

King Crimson's Tony Levin [*left*] and Adrian Belew in Illinois, June 22, 1984

KING CRIMSON

Three of a Perfect Pair

ADRIAN BELEW SHEDS SOME LIGHT ON THE BAND'S DUAL-PERSONALITY 10TH ALBUM — AND FINAL STUDIO RELEASE FROM THE FRIPP/BELEW/LEVIN/BRU CREW

By Ryan Reed

THE DEFINITIVE TRACK from *Three of a Perfect Pair*, King Crimson's underrated 10th LP, could be its deepest cut: "Dig Me" is three minutes of atonal avant-rock chaos interspersed with gleaming New Wave choruses — a combo that crystalizes the prog quartet's evolved form by 1984.

"I went into the studio one day and said, '[*This piece*] is going to be no set tempo or rhythms — very disconnected,'" says singer-guitarist Adrian Belew, describing an early session in England. "It was our way of combining this industrial approach with an actual *song*." It's a microcosm of *Perfect Pair* itself, the summit of what guitarist and Crimson torch-carrier Robert Fripp had mapped out, creatively, as the "incline to 1984."

"When we started, Robert had a kind of plan laid out that we would do three records in three years," Belew says, describing the fertile period that also birthed 1981's *Discipline* and 1982's *Beat*. But this third installment of the Eighties trilogy was more experimental *and* more melodic, with each sonic mode occupying its own half of a vinyl LP. Belew says he and Fripp outlined most of the basic frameworks together, playing "quietly with our two electric guitars unplugged." And even though he'd recently exhausted a mountain of ideas on his first two solo LPs, Belew still managed to polish off *Perfect Pair*'s more radio-friendly cuts, including the shadowy "Sleepless"; some of the more untamed tunes, like "Larks' Tongues in Aspic (Part III)," remained instrumental. The final product is essentially two EPs smashed together — a unique bit of sequencing that gives the album its own quirky character.

Belew muses that the hooky "Man with an Open Heart," for example, would sound "really out of place" surrounded by "this muscular, crazy, wonderful stuff" from side two — in "this industrial musical junkyard we created." Still, there were strange sonic secrets lurking within even the catchiness, including "Three of a Perfect Pair," which mingles interlocking guitars and complex time signatures with a blues-like three-chord structure and backing vocals that — no joke — were inspired by Motown.

"When I got to the chorus — and I know this is going to sound crazy — I thought I'd write something like the Supremes might have sung," Belew says with a laugh, recreating the refrain. "But, of course, with it turning out to be in 7, it's not exactly a Supremes song, is it?"

> "ROBERT HAD A KIND OF PLAN LAID OUT THAT **WE WOULD DO THREE RECORDS** IN THREE YEARS"
> **ADRIAN BELEW**

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

continued on page 68

title track, which is packed with Skaggs' impressive bluegrass brilliance. (BTW, do not deprive yourself of Albert Lee's many versions of this barn burner, which he co-wrote with Tony Colton and Ray Smith). And then there was **Mahavishnu Orchestra's** dazzling *Mahavishnu*, which found John McLaughlin letting loose on "Nightriders," which we should probably transcribe one of these days.

The Replacements unleashed *Let It Be* on the 2nd, showing the world through angst-filled songs like "Unsatisfied" "Answering Machine" and a cover of Kiss's "Black Diamond" why they were the world's greatest indie band — and that guitarist Bob Stinson was no joke. **XTC's** *The Big Express* joined the party on the 15th, bringing with it the ping-ponging syncopated chord stabs of the aptly titled "Wake Up."

Toto's *Isolation* followed on the 18th, which Steve Lukather used for sonic exploration through differing approaches from solo to solo, crafting a favorite among the Toto faithful, which Lukather says he's "very shocked anyone even remembers." Lukather did the same on **Paul McCartney's** October 23 offering (an album and a feature film), *Give My Regards to Broad Street*, namely on a new version of Wings' "Silly Love Songs" and its

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1984

METALLICA

Ride the Lightning

A 40TH ANNIVERSARY LOOK BACK AT THE ALBUM THAT CHANGED METAL FOREVER AND PUT A JOLT IN THE BAND'S CAREER **By Andrew Daly**

YOU'D BE HARD-PRESSED to find Metallica songs that hit harder than the four that open *Ride the Lightning*. If you were there in July of '84, odds are you remember where you were the first time you gazed at the album's cover, which depicts an electric chair in the middle of a midnight thunderstorm with, you guessed it, lightning surging down.

Based on that grim imagery, it's expected that themes of death and destruction would run rampant throughout *Ride the Lightning*. But this was a thrash metal album, after all, so why wouldn't rage be nestled up against sociopolitical commentary? Despite Metallica's inherent youth, *Ride the Lightning* found success tackling tricky subjects... and chugging riffs and hair-raising solos.

The latter portion of that statement came into greater focus when Kirk Hammett told *Guitar World* in 2014: "Around the time we were writing *Ride the Lightning*, I was taking guitar lessons from Joe Satriani. All the stuff I learned from Joe impacted my playing on *Ride the Lightning*. He taught me stuff like figuring out what scale was most appropriate for what chord progressions. He taught me how to pick the notes I wanted for guitar solos, as opposed to just going for a scale that covered it all. He also helped me map out the whole chromatic-arpeggio thing, and the importance of positioning and minimizing finger movement. That was a really important lesson."

Going back to *Ride the Lightning's* opening four tracks, "Fight Fire with Fire," "Ride the Lighting," "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "Fade to Black," it's evident that Hammett took what he'd learned and made a conscious decision to stamp his imprint across thrash metal, which, at the time, was not a fully established genre.

This was before *Master of Puppets* (1986) would cement Metallica as legends. And it was years before the Black Album, AKA *Metallica* (1991), turned them into the biggest band in the world. Back in '84, James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Cliff Burton and Kirk Hammett were just four young hellraisers looking for good times via skull-stomping music, and boy, howdy, did they find it. From the jump, *Ride the Lightning* showed growth, as "Fight Fire with Fire" opens with an acoustic bit by Hammett before Hetfield kicks the door in with a riff akin to a sonic assault, at which point Hammett pops the clutch, and chimes in with power chords and a blood-letting solo that somehow errs toward low-key blues.

Elsewhere, specifically, three tracks later, on what should be considered Metallica's definitive track (sorry, "Enter Sandman" fans), "Fade to Black," Hammett and Hetfield showed their worth via an amalgam of downstroke riffage and perfectly phrased, lyrical solos that found Hammett doing anything but relying on only his wah pedal for interest.

These two songs are important signposts for Metallica, as was the ominous "For Whom the Bell Tolls," as they proved that Metallica was capable of stepping outside the shadow of Dave Mustaine, who, despite being fired before its recording, claimed three songwriting credits on *Kill 'Em All*. Throughout *Ride the Lighting*, Hetfield showed why he's the finest rhythm guitarist in metal and a lyricist capable of tackling heavy subjects like suicide and loneliness. The result was Hetfield and Hammett emoting their rage-filled compositions in ways that no other heavy metal guitar duo

In 1984, Paul McCartney recruited David Gilmour, Dave Edmunds, Steve Lukather, Chris Spedding, Eric Ford and more

accompanying music video, which Lukather recalls as "a magical experience and a dream come true." He'd "spent a lifetime idolizing the Beatles, so to work with one of them meant everything — and it definitely influenced what I did on Toto's *Isolation*," he says. (It's worth noting that *Give My Regards to Broad Street* also features six-string contributions from David Gilmour, Dave Edmunds, Chris Spedding, Eric Ford, 10cc's Eric Stewart and someone named Paul.)

But Macca wasn't the only old-guard rocker with new music, as a reunited Mark II **Deep Purple** had *Perfect Strangers* up their sleeves, an album they let loose on the 29th, leading to a successful record, though, to be fair, Ritchie Blackmore came off a tad disinterested (despite the album's blazing solos). Meanwhile, East L.A. rockers **Los Lobos** delivered a doozy with the majestic *How Will the Wolf Survive?* It's best known for its single, "Don't Worry Baby," and its killer riffs, solos and tones courtesy of Cesar Rosas and David Hidalgo.

Next up? **AC/DC's** *'74 Jailbreak*. The record, which was actually re-

Metallica's Kirk Hammett [*left*] and James Hetfield do their thing in February 1984

"ALL THE STUFF **I LEARNED FROM JOE SATRIANI** IMPACTED MY PLAYING ON *RIDE THE LIGHTNING*"

KIRK HAMMETT (2014)

was at the time.

Along with that growth in musicianship, Metallica added variety to *Ride the Lightning* after "Fade to Black" wrapped by swooping into "Trapped Under Ice," a speed metal cut that lifts off and soars into "Escape," which is a dead ringer for an early Eighties Judas Priest cut, with just a touch of blood-soaked buzzsaw blade riffage dusted across the top. And that wasn't arbitrary, as Metallica, specifically Burton, Hetfield and Hammett, applied what they'd learned from *Kill 'Em All* and combined it with youthful rage and existing knowledge. "Cliff studied music in college," Hammett told *GW* in 2014. "I had a grasp of music theory, thanks to Joe, but Cliff went the whole length and learned musical theory and everything. [*Cliff*] was way into harmonies, and James really absorbed the dual-harmony thing and took it to heart. He made it his thing, but it was originally Cliff's. Cliff also inspired James greatly on counterpoint and rhythmic concepts."

Regardless of who brought what idea to the table, Metallica was speaking a new language across *Ride the Lightning*. To Hammett's point, many of Burton's nuances are present throughout "Creeping Death," which is mighty, to be sure. But digging into the thing, it reads back as a riff tour de force via Hetfield, which Hammett sends home with a bliss-toned solo.

But of all the tracks on *Ride the Lightning*, the most daring is the nearly nine-minute epic instrumental closer, "The Call of Ktulu." With gentle arpeggios in stark contrast to a heavy, doubled riff and multiple iconic solos, the track proves that as a soloist, Hammett isn't reliably repetitive, but, instead, a definitive thrash maestro.

Ride the Lightning would rake in multi-platinum success, putting Metallica on the worldwide radar for good. And 40 years later, despite the reverence for *Master of Puppets* and the success of the Black Album, it's *Ride the Lighting* that set the template. Without it, Metallica — and thrash metal — as we know it wouldn't exist.

JOHCREDITHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

The Smiths

The Smiths

The release of the Smiths' debut album heralded the arrival of a whole new kind of guitar hero for the indie age. For many, the band almost single-handedly created the indie genre in the U.K. The combination of Johnny Marr's bright, clean arpeggios and Morrissey's doleful vocals provided the perfect degree of light and shade. A self-confessed Rory Gallagher fan, interestingly, Marr's playing showed none of the traditional blues/rock influences that permeate so many guitarists' work. Employing unusual tunings, often using a capo to facilitate the use of open strings — an essential part of the jangling sound that defined the Smiths — Marr's guitar parts were distinctive and melodic enough to stand alone, even without Morrissey's vocals.

Marr obtained his signature sound with the aid of a Rickenbacker 330, returning a highly unfashionable instrument from the forgotten wastelands to the height of hip desirability, ramping up the price of used models overnight. Marr often said he strongly rejected all the notions of what a rock guitarist should be, and his choice of instrument reflected that. It'd be several years before he felt comfortable enough to wield the traditional tools of the trade — a Les Paul and a Strat. Marr's influence towers over the indie scene; his determination to avoid "being a soloist who just wants to display virtuosity" enabled him to rewrite the rule book. — *Mark McStea*

continued on page 70

corded in 1976 (and not '74), features plenty of wild guitar playing by Angus *and* Malcolm Young, who's actually credited with more *Jailbreak* guitar solos than Angus. Besides the cranking title track, the real burner here is "Baby, Please Don't Go," a trad blues tune that's been covered by everyone and their uncle, including Van Morrison and Aerosmith. Be sure to take a stab at Angus' pull-offs during the breakdown section; they're fun and easy and might even fool your aunts and uncles into thinking you can play like Eddie Van Halen (or at least Angus Young). Another member of the "recorded years earlier but not released until '84" club is **George Benson's** *I Got a Woman and Some Blues*, sessions for which date back to 1969.

The one and only **Frank Zappa** released four albums in 1984, only two of which feature guitars. The first of the pair, late October's *Them Or Us*, spawned semi-favorites like "Baby Take Your Teeth Out," "Sinister Footwear II" and "Ya Hozna" and starred Frank and a young Dweezil Zappa on guitar, along with Steve Vai and Ray White. Interestingly, blues great (and big-time Jimmie Vaughan influence) Johnny "Guitar" Watson shares some of the vocal duties. In terms of guitar highlights, look no further than the always impressive "Stevie's Spanking" and a live cover of the Allman Brothers Band's "Whipping Post."

1984

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

Rising Force

YNGWIE TAKES YOU BEHIND THE SCENES OF ONE OF THE GREATEST SHRED ALBUMS OF ALL TIME

By Amit Sharma

[*left*] Yngwie Malmsteen in 1984. [*right*] Yngwie fans line up for autographs at Tower Records in NYC, May 16, 1985

BEFORE THERE WAS an Yngwie Malmsteen, players like Ritchie Blackmore, Brian May and Uli Jon Roth had been experimenting with classical-inspired ideas in the context of hard rock, although it's safe to say they remained very much rooted in the pentatonic blues. When the Swedish maverick unleashed his debut in 1984, however, it was unlike anything anyone had ever heard, and it would go on to kickstart a whole movement of guitarists dedicating their lives to neoclassical sounds. After brief stints in Steeler and Alcatrazz following his move to the U.S., Malmsteen wrapped up the recordings for *Rising Force* just before his 21st birthday. The guitar world was never the same again.

What do you remember about making your solo debut?
I was still in Alcatrazz, but the label said we needed to do a solo album for Japan only. I called it *Rising Force*, which is the same name as a band I formed in 1978 — but that wasn't a band; it was me writing everything. Every drummer and bassist from Sweden was in it at some point! I got Barrie Barlow from Jethro Tull on drums, a keyboard player

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER BIRTHED **BRYAN Adams'** *Reckless*, which was far more guitar-filled than anticipated on the strength of songs like "Summer of '69," "Heaven" and "It's Only Love," which came courtesy of the ever-underrated Keith Scott. Elsewhere, there was/were plenty of blues afoot; **Johnny Copeland** gave us *Texas Twister*, featuring Stevie Ray Vaughan on "Don't Stop by the Creek, Son" and "When the Rain Starts Fallin'." (BTW, the album highlight is actually the SRV-free "I De Go Now"). And then there was **Albert Collins'** *Live in Japan*. Songs like "Shakin'" found Collins taking on a funkier, jam-oriented approach, leading to a feisty and definitive live set. But there was also *Bad Axe* by **Son Seals**, which netted a W.C. Handy Award for Best Contemporary Blues Album on the strength of his pure-toned, sure-fingered, warm-as-butter licks. This seems as good a time as any to bring up **Albert King's** Grammy-nominated 1984 offering, *I'm in a Phone Booth, Baby*, which was recorded in January in Berkeley and released a few months later (To be

Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson, Albert Collins, Johnny Copeland, Son Seals, Johnny Winter and Albert King made '84 a great year for blues guitar

BRIAN RASIC/GETTY IMAGES (YNGWIE) GARY GERSHOFF/GETTY IMAGES (FANS)

[*Jens Johansson*] and that was it. We started recording in a mobile truck studio, like bands did in the old days. It happened to be Stevie Wonder's! It was all done quickly before a tour. Whenever I had a day off, I'd fly back and track a few solos. In July there was a big hoopla in the Alcatrazz camp and I decided to leave that shit!

What happened next?
I started working on *Marching Out* [*1985*], which was supposed to be the first proper release. But you could still buy import records in America and so many people went to the stores to order *Rising Force* that it hit the charts and took on a life of its own. There was no promotion, no radio, nothing. The label were going, "Fuck, we have to release this worldwide!" I even got a Grammy nomination for it. I went on the road in 1985 with two records to promote.

Was the Duck your main Strat on the record, presumably fed into a vintage Marshall plexi?
Yeah, the Duck and another with a rosewood fingerboard in the same finish. There was also a natural model, too. I had a few by that point, all early Seventies models. What people don't understand about Strats is that Leo Fender sold the company to CBS in 1965, but it stayed at the same factory for another decade, so any Strat built up until 1975 will actually be really good. It started going downhill around the late Seventies. People think Seventies Fenders are bad, but that's not actually correct. The amp was a vintage plexi, which I still use. On my last tour, I had 56 heads on stage... 56!

What were you using to push the amp? Was it the DOD Overdrive Preamp 250 that inspired your own signature DOD YJM308 pedal?
That's exactly it. I bought that first DOD in Sweden back in 1978 and put it in front of a Marshall. That was my sound from until 1989, which is when I toured the Soviet Union. Somebody stole my pedal, but luckily nothing else. I had some overdrives built that were based on the one I lost. I have some really exciting news coming up, but I can't say just yet...

And how about the nylon acoustic you used on "Black Star," "Evil Eye" and "Farewell"?
It was just a cheap Aria Pro II thing. I think it was only worth around $120. I saw it lying around, so it ended up on a few tracks.

"Far Beyond the Sun" is one of your most famous compositions. You have to play it at every show!
And I love to play it! That one was written for the album, unlike some of the others, which were composed back in Sweden. I came up with it on tour and put the ideas on this little recorder I had. It's not a challenge, but I find it exciting to perform because there are a lot of big moments. There's a rule in classical composition, especially for small ensembles like string quartets, where you don't double up notes. You never let the viola player, violins and cellist play the same note — it's a waste of harmony. So if you listen to the guitar against the bass and keyboards, it's all extremely wide with thirds and fifths and so on.

The intro to "Evil Eye" comes from Johann Krieger's "Bourree," which also inspired Paul McCartney on "Blackbird" and Jimmy Page on "Stairway to Heaven."
I remember hearing it as a kid. It's something I learned on piano to understand counterpoint, like an exercise. But the way I took influence was extremely unusual. I was classically trained early on, and even though I was running through Marshall stacks and throwing my guitar around, I was playing arpeggios, linear scales, diminished and harmonic minor. Everyone was going, "What the fuck is *this*?!" Even Eddie Van Halen — god bless him, I fuckin' love him — was mainly pentatonic. I was radically different. What's funny about "Evil Eye" is that there's a staccato part that sounds like a Rush thing, but I actually took the rhythm from "White Christmas"! I used to do silly stuff like that. Music is a funny little medium. You can do crazy things.

continued on page 72

honest, we're not exactly sure when). Among the highlights is the "The Thrill Is Gone"-esque minor-key lead-off track, "Phone Booth."

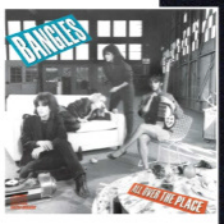
Meanwhile, **the Who** gave us a little something called *Who's Last*, which — let's face it — is all but forgotten by the general public these days. The album, which was recorded during the band's late-1982 U.S. tour (with Kenney Jones on drums), was negatively compared to 1970's *Live at Leeds* by critics (Well, yeah...). Yes, it does have an air of "contractual obligation album" about it, but Pete Townshend still sounds on top of his game — even though it was a little weird seeing him with a Tele.

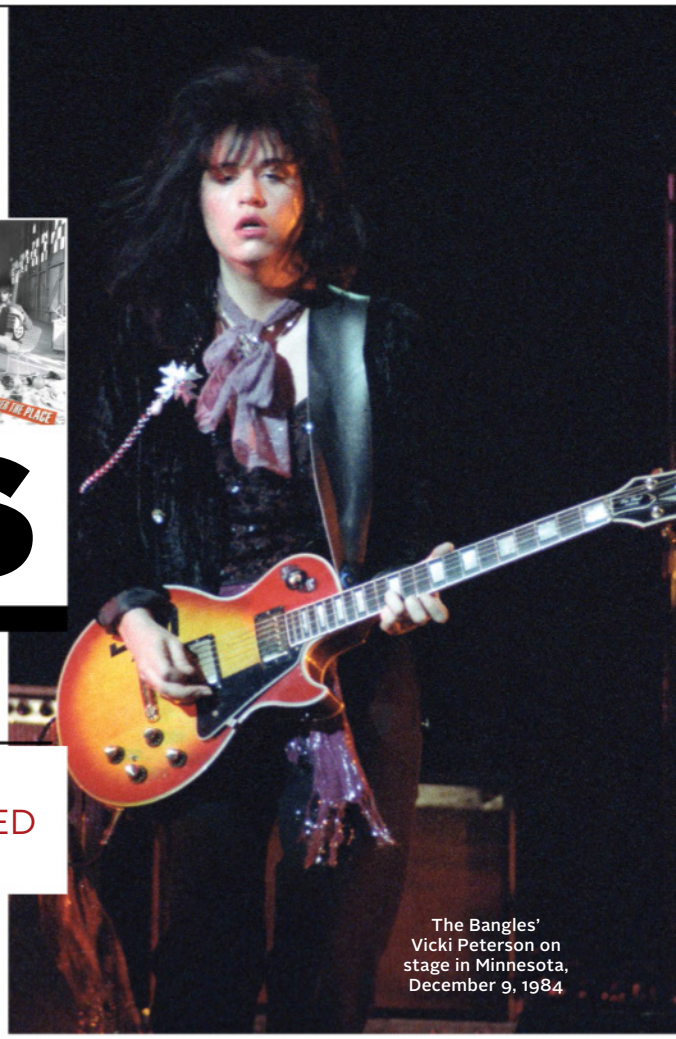
Another successful Sixties band that was still kicking in 1984 was **the Kinks**, who released *Word of Mouth* late in the month. The record is best known for the catchy hit single "Do It Again," which was a deliberate and catchy-as-hell throwback to the band's earliest riff-based work, and the Dave Davies-penned "Living on a Thin Line." In the intro we mentioned that most of the 1969 dudes were still kicking ass in 1984, and here's more proof: **Bob Dylan's** *Real Live* (produced by Glyn Johns) features an ample serving of Mick Taylor — the former Bluesbreaker and Rolling Stone — plus a touch of Carlos Santana ("Tombstone Blues"). Canadian rockers **Triumph** gave us *Thunder Seven*, home of "Midsummer's Daydream," one of

1984

THE BANGLES

All Over the Place





The Bangles' Vicki Peterson on stage in Minnesota, December 9, 1984

VICKI PETERSON EXPLAINS HOW FOUR BEATLES-CRAZED CALIFORNIA GIRLS WOOED 1984 WITH THEIR POWER-POP DEBUT

By Bill DeMain

GROWING UP IN the Sixties and early Seventies, all the future Bangles were mad for the Beatles. Susanna Hoffs used to pose in front of the mirror, pretending she was on stage with the Fabs. Michael Steele wore a mop-top wig and did skits in school. Debbi and Vicki Peterson dreamed of forming a band that would be the next Beatles.

"As I grew up, instead of wanting to marry Paul McCartney, I wanted to be him," guitarist/vocalist Vicki Peterson says. "And it was kind of magical that the four of us found each other, because we all shared the same obsession with the British Invasion, and the Beatles especially. They were our musical school. Their songwriting structures, harmonizing, and even the fact that there were four strong personalities with three lead singers — we wanted to emulate that."

By the early Eighties they were doing just that, as the Bangs (a lawsuit from another band with the same name forced them to add "les"). On the back of an indie-released EP, they carved out a tuneful niche in LA's Paisley Underground scene, gigging at clubs like The Music Machine and Cathay de Grande. When they signed with Police manager Miles Copeland, one of his first moves was to put them on the road, ultimately building chops that would feed into their 1984 debut album *All Over the Place*.

"That was a magic moment," Peterson says of the shift to touring life. "He said: 'How would you like to go on tour with the English Beat?' It was the opportunity we'd been waiting for. Debbi and I were still sharing a one-bedroom apartment in Hollywood, and I was sleeping in the living room. I was still driving a beat-up Volkswagen. So we all quit our day jobs and went on tour. And we toured non-stop."

But it wasn't always easy being an opener. "It was either no sound-check, or the promoter didn't bother telling anyone you were on the bill," Peterson says. "Then we'd face an audience of pseudo-punkers wanting to hear ska, and they're looking at this group of girls, thinking 'What the fuck is this?' But it built character."

Back in LA in late 1983, the quartet signed with Columbia, who put them in the studio with David Kahne. Working in Hollywood, at Crystal Sound and Soundcastle, Kahne was mostly hands-off, letting them experiment

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Rik Emmett's most beautiful guitar performances. **Slayer** brought forth their first live album, *Live Undead*. Jersey City's **Kool & the Gang** released the massive *Emergency*, which — like hundreds of other albums from 1984 — showcases a delicate balance between keyboards and guitar, in this case played by Claydes "Charles" Smith.

Last but not least, **Molly Hatchet** released *The Deed Is Done* while **REO Speedwagon** (featuring guitarists Gary Richrath and Kevin Cronin) gave us *Wheels Are Turnin'*, the album that spawned "Can't Fight This Feeling" and "One Lonely Night."

DECEMBER

AS DECEMBER KICKED off '84's last leg, **Metal Church** released their self-titled debut, showing why Craig Wells and Kurdt Vanderhoof were as good as any guitar duo in metal. Speaking of duos, **Hanoi Rocks** released *Two Steps from the Move* on the 8th, showing the glam-meets-punk stylings of Andy McCoy and Nasty Suicide on "I Can't Get It" and "Million Miles Away."

On the 21st, **Frank Zappa** reappeared with *Thing-Fish*, a dense (91-minute!) serving of comedy rock/rock opera, many bits and pieces of which had turned up on earlier albums. It stars the familiar three-guitar lineup of Zappa (senior; no Dweezil this time), Steve

with arrangements. "We were not experienced studio musicians by any stretch," Peterson says. "We were kind of finding our way as we went. Even though we were building a foundation of what we wanted to sound like instrumentally, we knew we wanted to do a lot of harmony vocals. That was important to us."

Although Peterson says the album's title reflected the band's feeling that it was stylistically all over the place, today, 40 years on, she says she can hear "more through lines and continuity." Indeed, with standout tracks "James," "Hero Takes a Fall" and "Dover Beach," it's one of the Eighties' most tightly constructed debuts — a distinct calling card.

At the same time, it's easy to forget just how out of step the Bangles' retro-pop sound was with prevailing trends. In May 1984, when the album was released, radio was spinning glossy hits such as Duran Duran's "The Reflex," Thompson Twins' "Hold Me Now" and Madonna's "Borderline." "The early Eighties hadn't fully achieved that critical sonic landscape we associate with the Eighties yet," Peterson says, "but I didn't love what was on the radio at all. So we were kind of fighting against that sound. Listening to *All Over the Place* now, I love how we approached it in a naturalist way. No synthesizers or drum machines. At the same time, we sweated over every single moment. We were all so exhausted by the end of it. I remember saying to my boyfriend at the time, 'I don't know how anyone ever makes a second record!'"

Of course, the Bangles did make several records, including their 1986 commercial peak *Different Light*, its singles "Manic Monday," "Walk Like an Egyptian" and "If She Knew What She Wants" propelling them to stardom via MTV and Top 40 radio.

Prince

Purple Rain

It's hard to know where to begin with a record as musically dense as Prince's *Purple Rain*, released on June 25. Prince had experienced success before, with 1982's *1999* becoming a prime example of his ability to merge pop, R&B, funk and rock into a blissful amalgam of love, music and guitar. The last portion of that equation, the guitars, is significant — especially on *Purple Rain*, even if the drum machines, synth effects and grandiosity overshadow them. Prince was a virtuoso, and his gorgeous solo from the closing track, "Purple Rain," drives home that notion with a bullet. Few could emote via six strings the way Prince could, and no one ever will connect with a guitar again as he did. But there was another secret guitar ingredient that made *Purple Rain* special: Wendy Melvoin. Melvoin entered Prince's camp in '80 when her girlfriend, Lisa Coleman, joined his band. Around this time, Prince heard Melvoin practicing backstage, leading him to ask her aboard. Melvoin sang background vocals on *1999*, but on *Purple Rain*, she played rhythm guitar on four tracks, one being "Let's Go Crazy," and was the string conductor on an additional three, the most notable being "Purple Rain." Prince might have been a virtuoso, but even the best needs a counterpoint. And for a moment in time, Melvoin was that and more. — *Andrew Daly*

Queen

The Works

For 1982's *Hot Space*, Brian May's melodic licks were pushed to the side in favor of synths. But by '84, May was ready to re-emerge, leaving drummer Roger Taylor to proclaim, "Let's give them the works!" Queen released *The Works* on February 27, and it was apparent that May was back from the jump. "Hammer to Fall" features one of the finest performances of May's career, and "Radio Ga Ga" spotlights him front and center. And then there's "I Want to Break Free," which balances synths, May's Red Special licks and Freddie Mercury's vocals in a way Queen never quite did again. — *Andrew Daly*

Albert King

I'm in a Phone Booth, Baby

Although he didn't die until 1992, Albert King — the man whose licks, attitude and trademark bends profoundly influenced people with names like Eric Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughan — recorded and released his final studio album in 1984. From the get-go, it's obvious King was into these sessions and wasn't just, um, phoning it in to take advantage of the post-1983 blues boom. On "You Gotta Sacrifice" and "The Game Goes On," the guitarist more than matches the energy level on earlier releases like *Live Wire/Blues Power* and *I'll Play the Blues for You*. But the most striking thing about the album is King's tone; we're not sure how blues purists felt about it at the time, but King seems to be playing through an MXR Phase 90 with the control rolled back. Anyway, be sure to check out the Robert Cray-cowritten lead-off track, "Phone Booth." — *Damian Fanelli*

Ramones

Too Tough to Die

The appearance of *Too Tough To Die* served to restore the faith of fans who'd loyally stuck by the band through a series of increasingly patchy albums. Widely considered to be their last truly essential record, no doubt bringing back Tommy Ramone to the producer's seat after a three-album hiatus had a lot to do with the return to the band's core values. If the album's title sounds like a mission statement, the music certainly fulfills the promise, with a harder-edged take on the band's patented bubblegum/punk/rock 'n' roll and three instant classics in the title track, "Howling at the Moon" and "Mama's Boy." — *Mark McStea*

GUTCHIE KOJIMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Vai and Ray White.

But this was the Eighties, after all, and just as '84 opened with a young virtuoso named Steve Vai, it closed with another in 21-year-old **Yngwie Malmsteen**, who was ready to rock and therefore dropped his debut and still-iconic neo-classical shred metal masterstroke, *Rising Force*. (BTW, Malmsteen's eye-opening fretwork also can be heard on **Alcatrazz's** *Live Sentence*, which was recorded in January and released a few months later.) Malmsteen might be decisive, moody, over-the-top and laconic, but there's no denying his scalloped-fret, mellow-yellow Strat greatness. And that's precisely why *Rising Force* was nominated for a Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental Performance, cementing Malmsteen as a pillar of shred guitar — and the man who handed the baton over to 1985.

Speaking of which, does 1985 (Dire Straits' *Brothers in Arms*, Megadeth's *Killing Is My Business...*, Vaughan's *Soul to Soul*, Clapton's *Behind the Sun*, ZZ Top's *Afterburner*, Rush's *Power Windows*, Slayer's *Hell Awaits*, the Firm's debut album) deserve this level of decisive, moody, over-the-top and anything-but-laconic coverage? Let us know! GW

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SOUND CHECK

Peavey Classic 20 combo

By Chris Gill

WHEN PEAVEY INTRODUCED their Classic series amps in the Seventies, the models were inspired by classic Fifties and Sixties designs but featured original circuits and features. Now that Peavey Classic amps have been around for five decades and evolved over the years, they've become classics in their own right.

The Peavey Classic 50 was a mainstay of Peavey's amp lineup for many decades, but recently the company has revamped the series with some downsizing (the good kind). Currently, the Peavey Classic series consists of the Classic 30 112 combo, Classic 20 MH mini head and their newest entry, the Classic 20 112 combo, which is the model we auditioned here.

With its vintage-style tweed cloth covering and oxblood-color grill cloth, the Classic 20 112 retains the vintage visual styling of Peavey's popular Classic amp models from the Nineties. However, whereas those versions had top-facing controls like a Fifties Fender tweed amp, the Classic 20 112 features front-facing controls that are preferred by most modern players.

The all-tube preamp and power sections are driven by three 12AX7 and two EL84 tubes, respectively, to deliver a conservatively rated 20 watts of output. Two LEDs located below the large jewel pilot light monitor the condition of the power tubes, illuminating green when everything is A-OK and red when a tube needs replacement.

The Classic 20 112 is a two-channel amp with a single EQ (bass, middle, treble) section shared by both channels. There's also a footswitch-controlled boost function that increases the output of each

The Classic 20 112 retains the vintage visual styling of Peavey's Classic amp models from the Nineties

"The Peavey Classic 50 was a mainstay of Peavey's lineup for many decades, but recently the company has revamped the series with some downsizing (the good kind)"

channel. The shared EQ means you won't be able to switch from mid-heavy clean to scooped-mid distortion, but it's perfectly fine for players who prefer to dial in a solid clean tone embellished with different levels of gain. The Pre knob allows users to shape channel 2's gain from overdrive crunch to sizzling distortion, and the Post knob adjusts channel 2's overall output level without adding overdrive or distortion (like a master volume).

A digital reverb effect with a depth control and a buffered effects loop are shared by both channels, and the reverb and effects loop can be individually switched on or off via a footswitch. Peavey includes a two-button footswitch with the amp that can be connected either to the Channel/Boost jack (footswitch one switches channels, footswitch two engages boost) or the Reverb/Loop jack (with one controlling reverb on/off and two engaging the loop). An additional two-button footswitch is available from Peavey for $44.99.

The rear panel is loaded with useful features uncommon on many amps in the Classic 20's price range. These include a 1-/5-/20-watt attenuator switch, USB and XLR outputs each with Peavey's Microphone Simulated Direct Interface emulation, a 1/8-inch headphone jack, a speaker defeat switch and a Ground Lift switch. The cabinet houses a single Peavey Sheffield 1230+ 12-inch speaker, and an 8-/16-ohm impedance switch allows users to pair the amp with a single external speaker cabinet as an option to the internal speaker.

The Classic 20's tones are very solid and working class, perhaps lacking the finesse of much more expensive tube amps but still providing a good base for most styles of music as well as an attractive foundation for a pedal-based rig. Channel 1 is clean, clean, clean, generating only a hint of overdrive with the main volume control cranked way up. At the full 20-watt setting, this amp is very loud and can easily compete output-wise with many 50-watt amps — something to consider if you're looking for a compact, light amp for a club gig.

At a price that's only a penny below $1,000, it's packed with an impressive variety of useful features, although some details like the plastic footswitch controller and included power cable that measures only a scant five-feet in length aren't quite as ready for the stage as many players would like. Fortunately, those details can be replaced easily and for a modest investment. If you're looking for a robust meat-and-potatoes amp that can survive daily gigs, perform well in the studio and doesn't cost an arm and a leg, the Peavey Classic 20 112 is a very worthy contender.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE
$999.99
MANUFACTURER
Peavey, peavey.com

PROS: Affordable; Post control makes it easy to dial in desired levels for channels 1 and 2 without affecting tone or gain; useful direct USB and XLR outputs with mic simulation; lush-sounding digital reverb.

CONS: Shared EQ for both channels; need to purchase additional footswitch controller to engage channel/boost and reverb/fx loop; plastic footswitch controller and short power cable.

THE BOTTOM LINE
With its two-channel design that delivers pristine clean and aggressive overdrive/distortion tones, both with boost, the Classic 20 112 is a highly attractive and affordable working class amp with an impressive variety of useful additional features.

Jackson Pro Plus Dinky MDK HT7 MS

By Chris Gill

THERE'S A SAYING that you can't judge a book by its cover. That may be true, but you can often tell a lot about guitarists by the instruments that they choose to play.

With its bright orange matte finish, black hardware and seven-string multi-scale design, Jackson's new Pro Plus Dinky MDK HT7 MS is boldly designed for players who demand to be seen and heard. This Jackson is the guitar equivalent of a Lamborghini Huracán Sterrato with Arancio Borealis paint—it's built with an emphasis on high performance and head-turning looks while also providing luxury and comfort.

Many seven-string guitars can be a bit bulky, but this model's slim Dinky-style body made of basswood and generous sculpted contours keep its weight at a minimum while maximizing comfort and playability. The bolt-on neck, featuring three-piece maple/wenge/maple construction, has a wide, flat profile, 12-to-16-inch radius and measures 1.875 inches at the nut to enable precise, fast playing. The multi-scale neck provides a 27-inch scale for the B (lowest) string and 25.5-inch scale for the E (highest) string, with the scale lengths for the remaining strings at separate lengths in between.

The angled, swept-fret design with 24 jumbo stainless steel frets is super comfortable to play and very easy for players with years of experience playing standard scales to adjust to almost immediately. The ebony fretboard features offset pearloid dot inlays between the lowest two or three strings and Luminlay side dots with excellent visibility on dim stages to help players stay oriented as they blaze and shred.

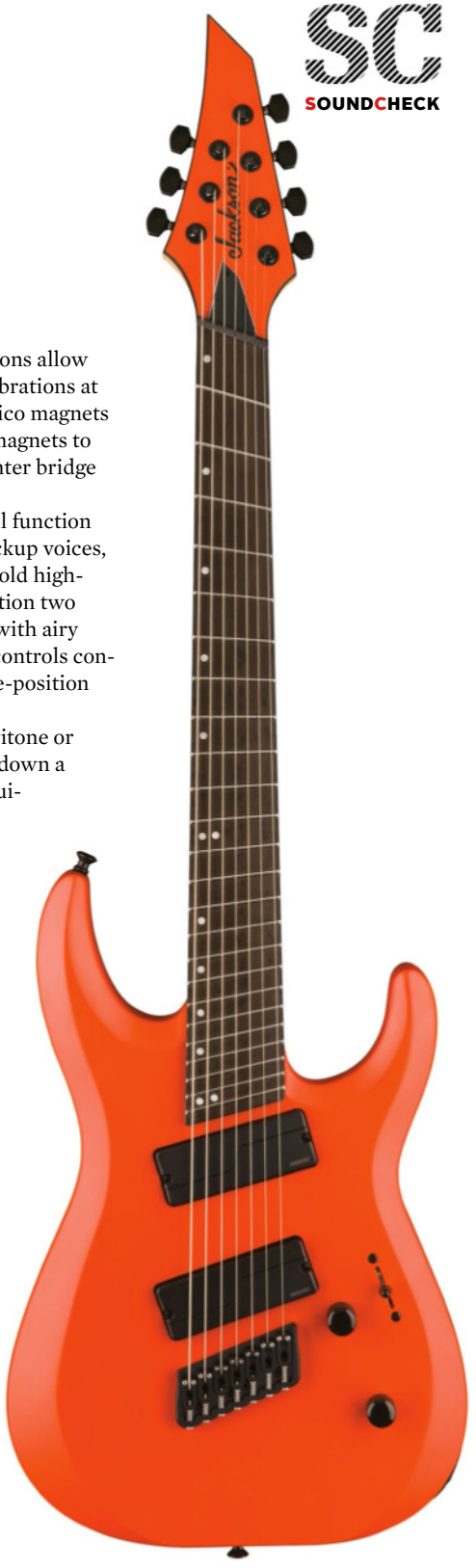
The fixed Hipshot 7 is also angled — our test example arrived from the factory with the saddles positioned to spot-on perfect intonation. Gotoh locking tuners and the Graph Tech TUSQ XL nut keep the strings solidly in tune even after the strings are violently bent and stretched.

The pickups are a pair of Fishman Fluence Modern PRF-MH8 active humbuckers, which you may recognize are eight-string pickups. However, because the pickups are angled both for tone and aesthetic purposes, the wider dimensions allow the pickups to capture each string's vibrations at full strength. The neck pickup has alnico magnets while the bridge pickup has ceramic magnets to provides warmer neck tones and brighter bridge tones.

The master tone control's push/pull function allows users to select two different pickup voices, with position one (down) delivering bold high-output tone with rich body while position two (up) provides crisp, articulated tones with airy treble and more focused mids. Other controls consist of a master volume knob and three-position blade pickup selector switch.

Because a low B string gets into baritone or bass territory (especially when tuned down a whole step to A), many seven-string guitars can sound flabby or muddy in the lower regions. This is not a problem here as the Fishman pickups deliver impressive clarity, attack and dynamics across the Jackson's entire frequency spectrum. The multi-scale design maintains consistent-feeling tension across all seven of the .009-.054 strings, particularly on the critical low B string, which never feels rubbery or too easy to bend out of tune and maintains desirable metallic twang.

The bold color and design of the Jackson Pro Plus Dinky MDK HT7 MS makes it an ideal choice for players who demand attention. This is not an axe for casually strumming cowboy chords, just like you wouldn't want to drive a Lamborghini a half mile at 20 mph to pick up a quart of nonfat milk. When you strap on this guitar, it defiantly exclaims that you mean business, so you'd better have the chops to back up the aggressive, high-performance image it projects.



CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $1,849.99
MANUFACTURER: Jackson Guitars, jacksonguitars.com

PROS: Multi-scale fretboard and active Fishman pickups provide outstanding clarity across entire extended note range; slimmed down Dinky body provides excellent playing comfort; simple control design.

CONS: Bold orange finish and high-performance multi-scale design is ideal almost exclusively for soloists and shredders, not more meek-minded players.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The Jackson Pro Plus Dinky MDK HT7 MS is a true high-performance seven-string designed for players with exceptional chops and a discriminating ear for perfect intonation and consistent feel.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE:
$3,999
MANUFACTURER:
Martin Guitar,
martinguitar.com

- **PROS:** USA-made; lightweight; strong projection and added warmth in a maple and black walnut constructed acoustic; GP-body style and modified low oval neck profile offer player comfort and electric playability; top-of-the-line LR Baggs Anthem electronics; eye-catching Amber Fade Sunburst finish.

- **CONS:** Expensive. Some players may prefer traditional tonewoods.

- **THE BOTTOM LINE:** The impressive Martin Guitar GPCE Inception Maple is a step forward in a nouveau acoustic that utilizes domestic tonewoods and innovative design to project its warmly enhanced voice but at its core retains that fundamental "Martin tone."

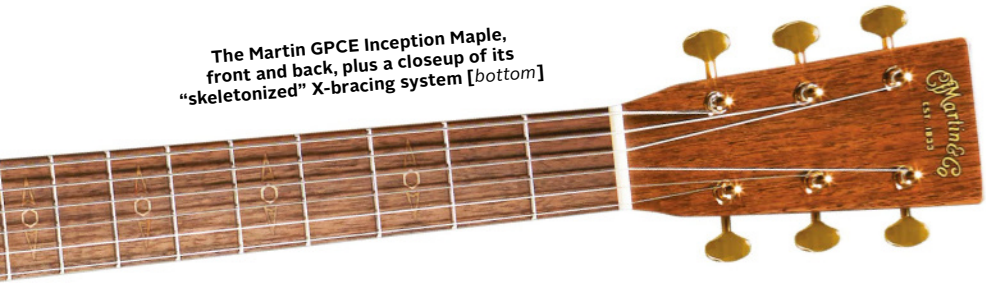
Martin Guitar GPCE Inception Maple

By Paul Riario

WHEN YOU INTRODUCE a new acoustic with a name like "Inception," it stirs up at least one pressing question about a movie with the same name — at least for me. That said, I quickly found out Inception isn't some fanciful collaboration between director Christopher Nolan and Martin Guitar for an instrument that manipulatively invades your dreams. Instead, it's an acoustic that bears an imaginative design using sustainably harvested tonewoods, and if anything, might ideally "plant" some genuine musical inspiration in you with its warmly focused response.

So what is the idea behind the Inception Maple? It's essentially Martin Guitar's fresh approach in using domestic tonewoods to create a uniquely voiced acoustic geared toward singer-songwriter players and fingerstylists. What makes it instantly inviting is the fact that it arrives in Martin's comfortably compact "Grand Performance" GP-body shape fashioned with a generous cutaway and onboard LR Baggs Anthem electronics. Of the Inception's many focal points, what stands out is its predominantly maple construction — hence its moniker, the Inception Maple — found along its sides and visually striking three-piece back made of maple along with a prodigious centerpiece wedge of black walnut. In addition, an FSC-certified European spruce top, black walnut for the neck and headplate and a black walnut fingerboard adorned with hex arrow inlays made of maple, round out the rest of the guitar. Martin went to great lengths to keep the Inception primarily a wood instrument, as evidenced by its tidy walnut binding and lack of plastic, pearl or abalone adornments. Finally, it all comes together in an arresting Amber Fade Sunburst in an ultra-thin satin finish.

Considering that traditional tonewoods (like mahogany and rosewood) not only come at a premium cost but might not be as readily available in the future, Martin's concentrated effort to source prevalent North American hardwoods such as maple and walnut for the Inception is a smart move in building a new generation of acoustics using sustainable woods. However, as a tonewood, maple leans toward brighter dynamics and a more immediate response, and for that, Martin put



The Martin GPCE Inception Maple, front and back, plus a closeup of its "skeletonized" X-bracing system [*bottom*]

in a great deal of analysis and measurement in broadening maple's inherent sonic properties to achieve an enriching new voice while also embracing that distinctive "Martin tone." To get there, an elaborate system was implemented under the top and body to expand the dynamic range of the Inception. Using lasers to weight-relieve the hexagonal honeycomb "skeletonized" X-bracing and carving "sonic" tone channels around each brace allows the top to vibrate even more freely without compromising the guitar's structural stability. Moreover, the widest area of the walnut back wedge is deliberately positioned below the guitar's black walnut bridge to reflect the energy from the top for increased bass response and warmth in the Inception's tone.

What this all adds up to from Martin's spectral analysis is that the Inception's skeletonized bracing increases sustain while its sonic channeling increases amplitude. While I don't dispute the results, I'm not sure there's that much of a difference there compared to other Martin acoustics I own. Regardless, most of us just want to know what the Inception Maple sounds and feels like, which I can tell you, is quite remarkable. Martin intended to make "maple sound better than it ever has" and undoubtedly, the Inception succeeds in removing the strident and compressed overtones of maple and replaces it with a softer brightness, ringing midrange and a firm bass as you strum through cowboy chords. It's certainly a louder Martin guitar that belies its GP-body size and powerfully projects a crisp and airy tone with a snappy response. For fingerstyle playing, the Inception maintains a focused balance between the bass and treble registers where each note is heard cleanly. Another highlight for me is that the Inception is set up with Martin's Kovar strings and a low action similar to Martin's SC-series of acoustics that feels instantly like your favorite electric, and combined with its modified low oval neck profile and fantastic fretwork, makes playing the Inception worth your time.

Does the Inception offer the tonal complexity of some of Martin's Authentic models? No, but that was never the intention, for me, I find the Inception is an acoustic to be experienced because I believe its finely-tuned voice will resonate among many players.

THE SPECS

- **BODY SIZE:** Grand Performance 14-Fret Cutaway
- **CONSTRUCTION:** Dovetail Neck Joint
- **TOP, BACK AND SIDE FINISH:** Satin
- **BRACING PATTERN:** Scalloped skeletonized X-brace
- **SCALE LENGTH:** 25.4"
- **FINGERBOARD WIDTH AT NUT:** 1 3/4"
- **TOP MATERIAL:** FSC Certified European Spruce
- **NECK SHAPE:** Modified low oval with a high-performance neck taper
- **BACK MATERIAL:** 3-Piece Maple with Black Walnut
- **SIDE MATERIAL:** Maple
- **ELECTRONICS:** LR Baggs Anthem
- **TOP COLOR:** Amber Fade Sunburst
- **BRIDGE STYLE:** Sloped Modern Belly - Drop-in Saddle
- **BINDING:** Black Walnut
- **BRIDGE MATERIAL:** Black Walnut
- **PICKGUARD:** Tortoise Pattern
- **SADDLE:** Compensated White Tusq
- **ROSETTE:** Multi-Stripe
- **NECK:** Black Walnut with Black Walnut fingerboard
- **FINGERBOARD INLAY STYLE:** Tortoise Pattern
- **NUMBER OF FRETS:** 20
- **TUNING MACHINES:** Gold Open Gear with Butterbean knobs

Buzz Bin

Funny Little Boxes Skeleton Key

By Paul Riario

COUNTLESS STOMPBOXES EMULATE legendary amps as well as the original versions of pioneering pedals. Meanwhile, collaborative artist pedals are being made ad infinitum because, just like potato chips, we can't have just one. But hold on — somebody designed a pedal that aims to imitate the sound of a band or a particular album?! What is this sorcery you speak of? Well, funny you should ask because a homespun U.K. brand named Funny Little Boxes has done just that with a brilliantly novel stompbox called the Skeleton Key. It deftly replicates many of the identifiable guitar tones recorded by Josh Homme and his band, Queens of the Stone Age.

This isn't the first time Funny Little Boxes has daringly attempted such an undertaking. A few years ago, Matthew Webster, the affable guitar instructor from his "Let's Play All" YouTube channel, challenged his mate, Andrew Ilgunas, a pedal builder from Norwich, England, to create a pedal that captures the tones heard on Pearl Jam's breakthrough 1991 album, *Ten*, which culminated in the fantastic 1991 pedal. If you haven't heard it yet, you should check out how strikingly close the pedal nails the gain stage of Stone Gossard's and Mike McCready's JCM-fueled Marshalls. This time the pair are back with the aptly named Skeleton Key pedal, which seemingly unlocks the core tones of most QOTSA songs. One key problem they encountered when voicing the pedal is that while there is a resounding similarity to the QOTSA guitar sound, it's far more nuanced than you'd expect. For one, Homme's sound isn't as saturated or high-gain as you would believe it to be, and more importantly, the Skeleton Key is not a clone of the mythic Peavey Decade amp (the apparent "secret weapon" of QOTSA's recorded basslines). The duo's thorough deep-dive resulted in an original circuit for an op-amp distortion pedal with a simple three-knob trio of Volume, Gain and Tone; top-mounted jacks; LED power indicator and 9-volt power jack (no battery). Of note, Webster was able to enlist Boneface — the artist behind QOTSA's album artwork for 2013's *...Like Clockwork* and 2017's *Villains* — for the original artwork and handwritten control labels that adorn the pedal's face.

It's very difficult for one pedal to reproduce an artist's sonic fingerprint, something that was most likely achieved with numerous amps, effects and compression. You would view it with the same degree of skepticism as you would at a preset that reads "Cliffs of Dover" on a digital modeler. But I have to hand it to the blokes behind the Skeleton Key for getting wildly close to that elusive QOTSA sound. Moreover, as a fascinating by-product of this venture, FLB may have unintentionally introduced an original-sounding drive pedal that I find compelling. So, no, it doesn't encompass all of Homme's grinding tones; however, it's best to characterize the Skeleton Key as the main drive ingredient of the QOTSA recipe. Meaning that the sledgehammer rhythms of "The Lost Art of Keeping a Secret" and "No One Knows" are good barometers of the SK's core tone. Anything beyond that, you'll need some help — courtesy of a fuzz and an octave pedal. Both the Gain and Tone controls are highly interactive to dredge up that tight-yet-sludgy fuzziness Homme & Co. slogged on their songs, and setting the Tone and Gain around 9 and 3 o'clock respectively gets you 90 percent there.

All in all, the Skeleton Key is a sonic love letter to QOTSA, not to mention a collectible. If there's one "Feel Good Hit of the Summer," it's this excellent pedal.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: £99 (approx. $106.12)
MANUFACTURER: Funny Little Boxes, funnylittleboxes.co.uk

PROS: The fundamental QOTSA sound captured in one pedal; Dynamically full-sounding; Aggressive growl that maintains clarity throughout the range of its controls; Original artwork by QOTSA artist Boneface; hand-built; collector's item.

CONS: No battery operation; Five-six week wait time on orders.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The Skeleton Key is about as close as you're gonna get to that grinding, sludgy sound made famous by QOTSA, but can exist entirely as a dynamic and expressive overdrive.

Seymour Duncan PowerStage 100 Stereo

By Chris Gill

GUITARISTS INTERESTED IN building a custom stereo rig based on preamps and/or modeling devices or who would like to explore using a wet/dry/wet setup often reconsider once they realize they'll probably need a separate power amp. This is because they're afraid that their rig will grow into an unwieldy monster, requiring refrigerator-sized racks, a dedicated tech to load and set it up and a van to haul everything around.

The Seymour Duncan PowerStage 100 Stereo offers a very attractive compact alternative to a conventional power amp. Measuring only about 6-1/4 x 5 x 2-1/2 inches, it's small enough to fit on a pedalboard, yet its performance is comparable to a full-size rack unit. Even better, it provides features like a comprehensive EQ section, cab simulation on/off switch, two ¼-inch input jacks (left and right) and two ¼-inch speaker outputs that are targeted specifically at guitarists' needs. With 100 watts of output power per channel at 4 ohms/1% THD (or 50 watts at 8 ohms/1% THD), the PowerStage 100 Stereo offers impressive power for its small footprint.

The EQ section consists of active Bass (74Hz), Low-Mid (389Hz), Hi-Mid (1.55kHz), Treble (4.6kHz) and Presence (11.0kHz) controls with 13.2 to 13.6dB of boost or cut. This EQ section can be individually engaged or disengaged for the speaker and XLR balanced line outputs. For example, you could engage EQ for the stage speakers only while sending a non-EQ signal to the house sound system or vice versa. The Cab Sim switch engages built-in cabinet simulation for the balanced line outputs only. The large output level control is front and center for quick adjustments assisted by separate power amp and preamp clip LED indicators. A small, quiet fan keeps the amp from overheating.

I used the PowerStage 100 Stereo to configure my dream compact wet/dry/wet rig with a Friedman Pink Taco head, Suhr Reactive Load box, Boss SDE-3000EVH delay and three 1x12 cabinets. I also tried it with a Fractal Axe-FX III and a pair of 4x12 cabinets along with a direct XLR recording feed to a computer. The power amp's sound quality with both rigs was pristine with warmth and definition dialed in for guitar tones, and the output level was more than loud enough for club stages. If you need a stereo amp with more output, Seymour Duncan also offers the PowerStage 700, but it only has 3-band EQ and comes in a rackmount configuration. The amp's True Cab Circuitry delivers attractive guitar speaker cabinet tone, but some players may prefer the greater variety of an external cab simulator.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $599
MANUFACTURER: Seymour Duncan, seymourduncan.com

PROS: Compact pedalboard-friendly design; stereo guitar inputs, speaker outputs and balanced XLR outputs; powerful 5-band EQ section individually switchable for speaker and balanced outputs; cab simulation.

CONS: Some users may prefer more power output; cabinet simulator provides only one cab tone.

THE BOTTOM LINE
The Seymour Duncan PowerStage 100 Stereo is a truly pedalboard-friendly power amp that's ideal for any guitarist who wants to use stereo modelers and/or effects or configure a wet/dry/wet rig that doesn't require unwieldy racks and delivers pristine sound quality.

IN DEEP

by Andy Aledort

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/may2024

IN THE GROOVE, PART 2

More on how to lay a solo deep in the pocket

LAST MONTH, WE began exploring ways to instill a solo with a solid groove and a deep pocket. A great technique I have found for fortifying one's connection to the groove is to first set up a specific repeating vamp then utilize different approaches to play over it, in terms of the phrasing and syncopation of the lines. This exercise allows one to study two things at once: first, we are tasked with coming up with a foundation riff that has a clearly defined groove, built from its own collective syncopations of quarter-, eighth- and 16th-note accents. When we solo, the goal is to connect the syncopations of the solo to those of the vamp. This month's vamp is played in the key of G and with a swing-16ths groove not unlike that heard in Shuggie Otis' "Me and My Woman."

As shown in **FIGURE 1**, the four-bar vamp is played fingerstyle and starts on the low G root note followed by the open G string. The low G is then struck again, followed by pairs of notes on the D and open G strings, first E, 4th string, 2nd fret, and then F at the 3rd fret, with both notes played against the open G. After a double pull-off from F to E to D, the first phrase repeats at the start of bar 2 and is then followed by a slightly more complex line built from steady 16th notes across beat 3 into beat 4.

Bar 1 is repeated in bar 3, followed in bar 4 with a chromatically ascending octaves figure sounded on the 6th and 4th strings, serving as the resolution of the phrase.

FIGURE 2 presents a four-bar improvised solo played over the vamp. In bar 1, I come in on the upbeat of beat 1, hold the note through beat 2 and follow it with a double pull-off from G to F to the open D on the upbeat of beat 2, played as a 16th-note triplet. I then immediately hammer back up from F to G on the D string. Overall, the solo is based on the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B♭, C, D, F) with the inclusion of the major 3rd, B, as well as the major 2nd, A.

As you play through the rest of the figure, notice the ways in which the line is built rhythmically, as it moves freely between quarter notes, eighth notes, 16th notes and 16th-note triplets.

FIGURE 3 zeros in on the way the vamp lick kicks off, as octave G notes are followed by two-note pairs on the D and G strings. **FIGURE 4** focuses on how the improvised solo "sits" on top of the vamp. As the solo develops, all of these little rhythmic patterns sync up with the vamp lick, like gears turning together.

FIGURE 5 offers another soloing idea over our vamp in G. Here I begin in a very unusual way. Utilizing pairs of notes on the top two strings, I first sound F and a B♭ below it, bending the B♭ up a half step up to B and then releasing it. I then shift this shape down one fret, sounding E with an A below it, bending the A up a half step up to B♭ and then similarly releasing the bend.

The remainder of the solo moves freely between quarter notes, eighth notes, 16th notes and 32nd notes, "notching" into the groove of the backing vamp as it unfolds.

Swing 16ths (♫ = ♫)

FIG. 1 N.C.(G7)

fingerstyle; let ring throughout

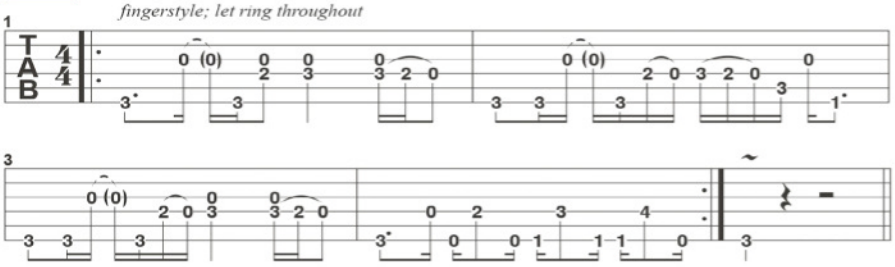


FIG. 2 (G7)

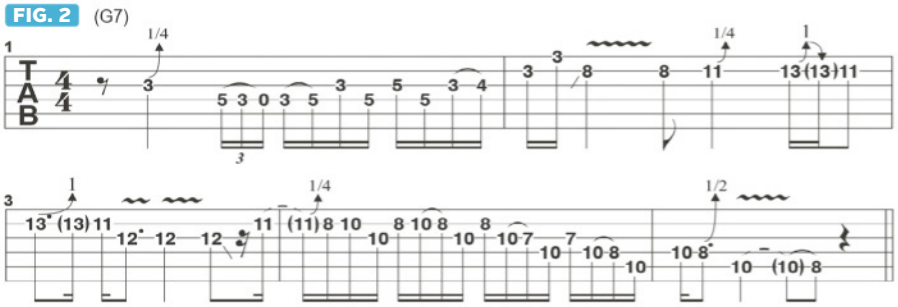


FIG. 3 N.C.(G7)

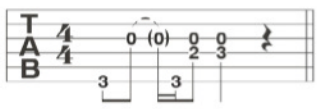


FIG. 4 (G7)

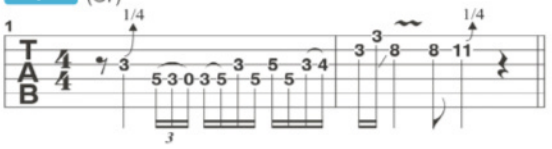
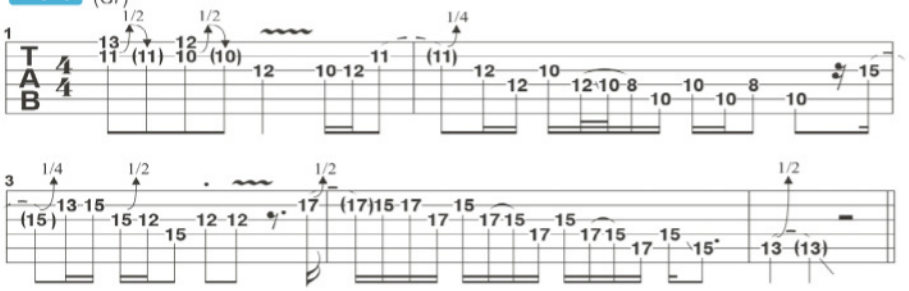


FIG. 5 (G7)



Andy Aledort's 2024 album, *In a Dream*, can be found on all streaming platforms and is available for download from longsongrecords/bandcamp.com

ALISON HASBACH

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/may2024

THE GUV'NOR

Reflections on the immortal Jeff Beck

IN THIS COLUMN, I'd like to talk about my admiration for the late, great Jeff Beck. I shudder even saying those words; I never in my lifetime thought there would be a world without B.B. King and Jeff Beck. He was one of my greatest heroes, as he was for millions of others and just about anyone that's ever picked up a guitar.

Jeff's playing was so expressive — his attack, tone, vibrato and melodic sense was peerless. If you ask anyone who their favorite rock guitarists are, more often than not the answer will be Eddie Van Halen and Jeff Beck. To many, those were the two greatest ever within the realm of rock guitar.

For about the first 10 years of his career, Beck's ax of choice was a Les Paul, and the records he cut with it, such as "Beck's Bolero," "Rock My Plimsoul," "Blues Deluxe," "You Shook Me," "Got the Feeling" and "You Know What I Mean," feature some of the most iconic Les Paul sounds of all time. Yes, he used a Broadcaster in the early Yardbirds days, and also a Stratocaster with the Jeff Beck Group, but the sound he produced with a Les Paul was beyond glorious. By 1976's *Wired*, he'd moved over to playing the Strat, as the tremolo arm became essential to his style.

The way I got introduced to Beck was hearing this riff, illustrated in **FIGURE 1**, which is along the lines of the intro to "Let Me Love You," from his first solo album, *Truth*. I heard that and was sold! Not a lot of notes, just a big Les Paul with a gigantic, fat sound. **FIGURE 2** expands on this intro riff with a longer single-note phrase, which is based on the F♯ minor pentatonic scale (F♯, A, B, C♯, E).

On the Les Paul, Beck had many signature riffs that are mind-blowing. **FIGURE 3** recalls a few licks in his "Let Me Love You" style, characterized by a sharp attack, staccato phrasing and perfect, vocal-like vibrato.

Jeff would also purposely do things to "mess stuff up," such as adding aggressive pick slides down the neck, or pressing down on muted strings and strumming hard to produce the high-pitched, other-worldly sounds on "Ice Cream Cakes." **FIGURE 4** offers a handful of riffs not unlike what you'll hear on that incredible track, moving from riffs based on A major pentatonic (A, B, C♯, E, F♯) to ones oriented around its relative minor F♯ minor pentatonic scale (F♯, A, B, C♯, E). In bar 3, I'm utilizing a staccato attack to sound the B note, bent up one whole step to C♯ and then slowly released back to B, followed by a fast, aggressive vibrato on F♯. In bars 4 and 5, I emulate Jeff's deft use of half-steps bends, quickly alternating between F♯ and E bent a half step up to F. I wrap up the phrase with expressive whole-step pull bends and releases on the lower strings.

FIG. 1 N.C.(F♯7)

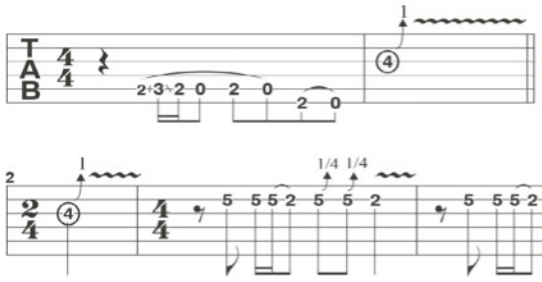


FIG. 2 N.C.(F♯7)

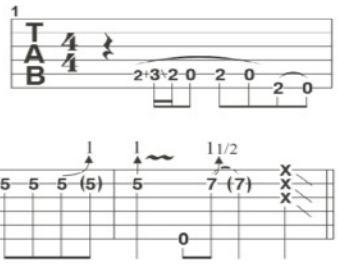
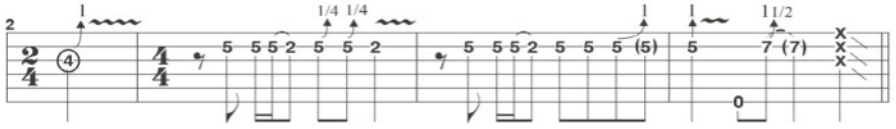


FIG. 3 N.C.(F♯7)

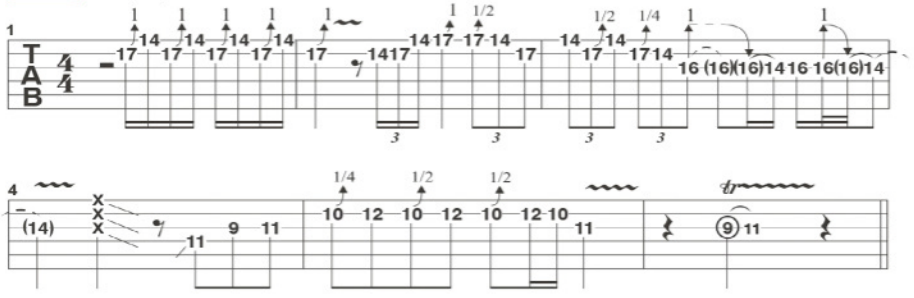
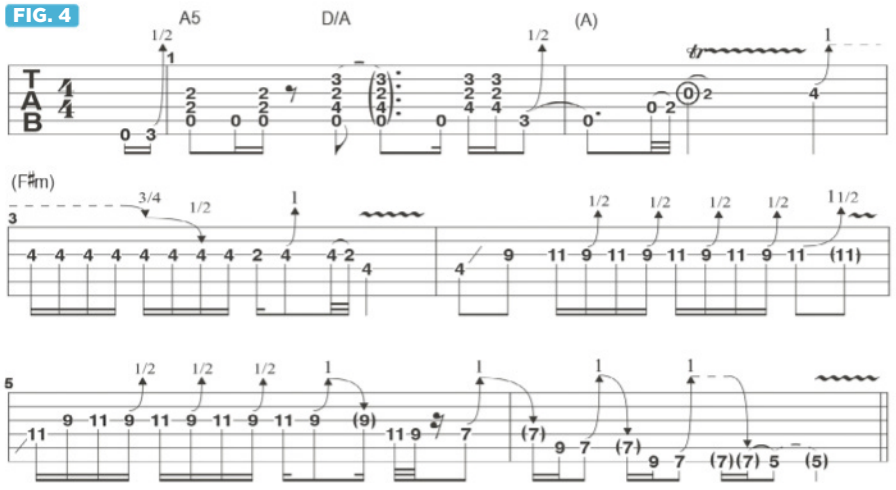


FIG. 4 A5 D/A (A) (F♯m)



Beck did so many things with the guitar that left me feeling, "I wish I had thought of that!" There are so many things he did that no one had ever done before, and once he had, everyone copied him. His Les Paul-straight-into-a-Marshall solo on "Blues Deluxe" just cannot be beat — it's angry and visceral and filled with so many inflections that I utilize every day, as do most players working within the blues and rock context. We owe it all to the great Jeff Beck.

Joe Bonamassa is one of the world's most popular blues-rock guitarists — not to mention a top producer and *de facto* ambassador of the blues.

JEFF FASANO

MELODIC MUSE

by Andy Timmons

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/may2024

GHOST NOTES

Finding the balance between melody and technique, with a look at the "Ghost of You" solo

"GHOST OF YOU" (*Resolution*, 2006) features a 24-bar solo that combines simple melodic phrases with aggressive, more technique-oriented lines. As always, my goal here was to craft a solo that will be as musically captivating as possible. Many of my favorite solos by other guitarists find the right balance between clearly defined melodies and a more aggressive delivery of chops and technique, and this solo is a good example of me relying on a hooky, melodic sensibility combined with flashes of speed.

Let's divide this complex solo into two sections and first address bars 1-12, shown in **FIGURE 1**. There's a one-bar pickup into the solo, which concludes the preceding section. The sextuplet lick on beat 4 of the pickup bar sets up the C note on the B string's 13th fret that falls squarely on beat 1 of the first full bar of the solo section (bar 1).

Before continuing with an examination of the intricacies of the solo, let's momentarily jump to **FIGURE 2**, which offers a global look at what's happening in this solo. The majority of the licks are based on the G minor pentatonic scale (G, B♭, C, D, F), shown in bar 1. Bar 2 illustrates the implied chord progression as outlined by the bass, which is simply playing root notes of the implied four-chord progression of Gm - B♭ - F - C.

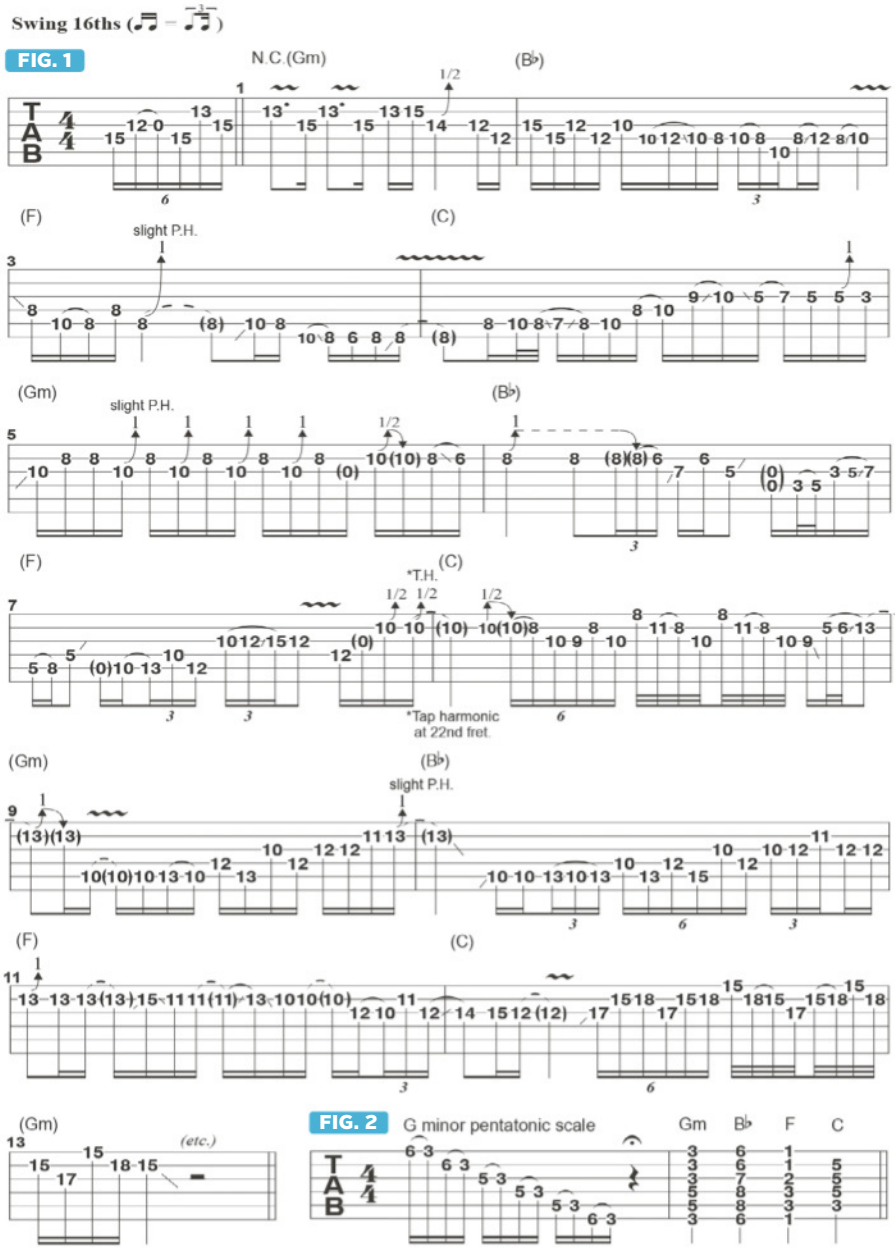
It's important to note that the last chord in the progression is C and not Cm, which some might consider to be the more "appropriate" chord when playing in the key of G minor. As this performance is just guitar, bass and drums, there are no chords played behind the solo. So I'm free to interpret the implied harmony as I choose. When the C chords arrive, I choose to reference C major by touching upon its major 3rd, E. To my ear, this provides a welcome harmonic balance against the minor feel of the G minor pentatonic licks played over G, B♭ and F.

Referring back to **FIGURE 1**, bars 1-7 sit pretty squarely in G minor pentatonic, with a few exceptions. In bar 4, on beat 2, I make reference to the C chord by sliding back to an E note and then ascend through the C dominant pentatonic scale (C, E, F, G, B♭).

Bar 5 features repeating F notes bent up a whole step to G, followed by a fretted G note on the next higher string. A few of these bent Fs are attacked aggressively with the pick, producing slight pinch harmonics (P.H.). In bar 6, I bring the 2nd of G, A, into play with a whole-step bend from G to A. Bar 7 ends with a bend from A to B♭, and the second half-step bend is articulated with a tapped harmonic ( ). After bending, tap the B string an octave above the fretted note, at the 22nd fret, to sound the artificial harmonic, with a quick bouncing motion.

This example wraps up in bars 11 and 12: bar 11 offers a return to a melodic approach, à la one of my guitar heroes, Steve Lukather, and bar 12 moves into a fast, repeated 32nd-note phrase.

Next month we'll address bars 13-24 of the solo as well as the song's outro. See you then.



Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Check out his new instructional course, "The Art of Story Telling."

SIMONE CECHETTI

LIVE FROM FLAT V

by Josh Smith

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/may2024

RSVP

Utilizing "call and response" as a phrasing technique

OVER THE LAST few months, I've talked about a few of the tools I like to use to strengthen the narrative content of my improvised solos. The first is repetition, and the second is musically "painting oneself into a corner," or what I refer to as "handcuffs." The third approach, which we will begin exploring today, is call and response.

The basis of this approach is to listen intently to what is played as it's happening, and then to respond to it on the fly with a phrase that "answers" the preceding one. It's all too easy to forget to pay attention to what we're playing, and fall into "auto pilot" mode, where the fingers are just moving through handfuls of familiar phrases, based on muscle memory, allowing the fret hand to go wherever it may go. If you intently listen to each phrase you play, the next one will be informed by it. This type of focus will enable you to improvise a musical story that makes sense and takes the listener on a captivating musical journey.

I'll start by coming up with an unplanned phrase off the top of my head. Played with a shuffle feel in the key of A, **FIGURE 1** is based on the A blues scale (A, C, D, E♭, E, G). Now that I've played that phrase, I've paid attention to its phrasing and rhythm. Immediately, my brain is screaming at me to answer it with the phrase shown in **FIGURE 2**, which builds on the previous one by starting the same way and then develops the musical idea by resolving it differently, to a high A note.

FIGURE 3 offers yet another twist on how I might answer my initial lick, this time wrapping it up with a G-to-A bend with some vibrato.

A great thing to think about is what George Benson does when he "scat" sings and plays, which means he's singing all of the licks he's playing on guitar. To my mind, George is "playing what he's singing," as opposed to "singing what he's playing," meaning he's allowing his musical choices as a singer to direct what he plays in his improvised guitar solo.

Put yourself in the same mindset — "singing" an answer to each lick as you move through a solo. For me, this is one of the most useful tools of all when it comes to creating solos with a solid narrative content. For years, I'd sit on the edge of the bed, play a lick, sing an answer to it, and then translate that lick to the guitar. It was almost as if I were two different musicians conversing.

Let's take four different phrases and come up with an "answer" for each. **FIGURE 4** illustrates the first phrase, and once it's had a moment to sink in, my natural answer is **FIGURE 5**, once again building on my initial idea but then wrapping it up in a different way. This same approach is demonstrated again in **FIGURES 5** and **6**.

FIGURE 7 offers a completely random improvised idea. A great way to respond musically is to play something like **FIGURE 8**, jumping up higher on the neck to reimagine the line in a different way. When you approach your improvisations like this, you give them a conversational quality, which is something everyone can relate to.

Triplet Feel ♫ = ♪ ♪

FIG. 1 (A7)

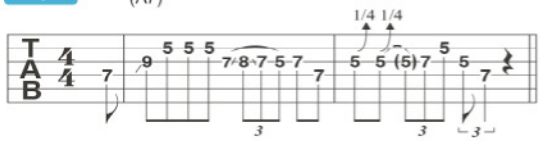


FIG. 2 (A7)

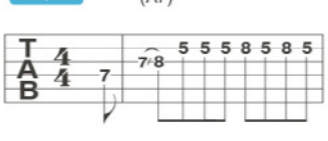


FIG. 3 (A7)

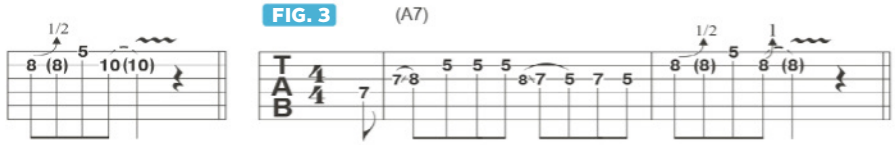


FIG. 4 (A7)

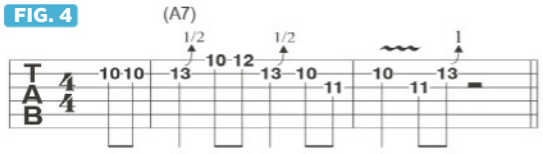


FIG. 5 (A7)

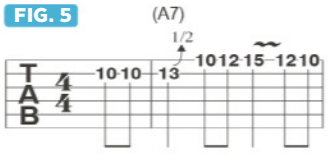


FIG. 6 (A7)

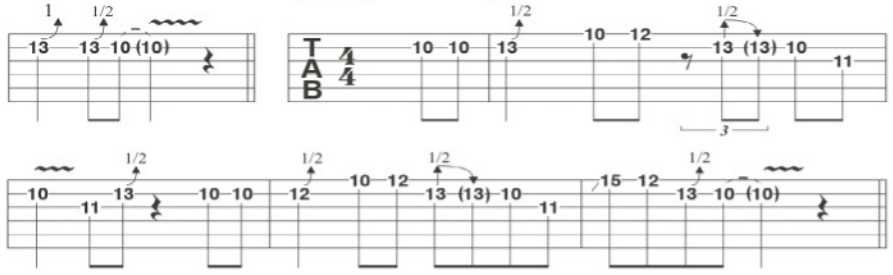


FIG. 7 (A7)

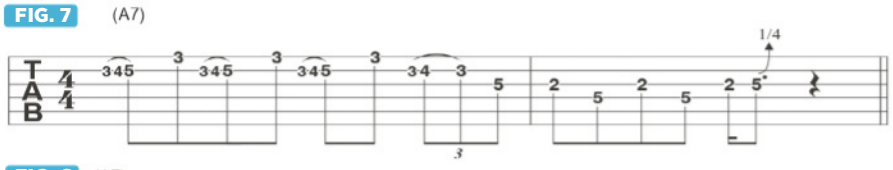
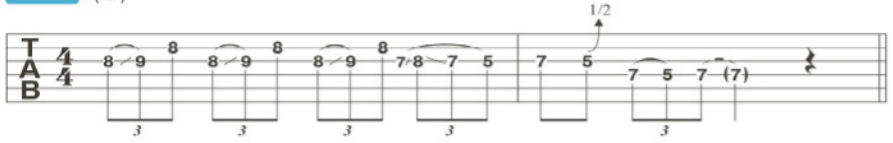


FIG. 8 (A7)



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Performance Notes

HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS **By Jimmy Brown**

"STILL LOVING YOU"
Scorpions

ONE OF THE most artfully composed power ballads from the Eighties, this dramatic song is built around a hauntingly beautiful, classical-style chord progression. It's also one of the few popular ballads from the classic rock era that's in a minor key. Scorpions guitarists Rudolph Schenker and Matthias Jabs, with their Gibson Flying V and Explorer guitars plugged into cranked Marshall amps, make great use of dynamic and textural contrasts and practice the lost art of rolling back the volume knobs for their instruments' bridge pickups to around "2," to effectively clean up their otherwise high-gain overdriven tones.

Schenker (Gtr. 1) begins the song by gently flatpicking a series of chordal arpeggios in G minor, fretting high, piano-like voicings and interjecting, at the end of the first bar, a tart melodic fill based on the G blues scale (G, B♭, C, D♭, D, F), which works surprisingly well over the underlying E♭maj7 chord, briefly implying an E♭7 sound. Notice the guitarist's highly unusual fret-hand fingerings for the first four chords, which he chose to facilitate playing the aforementioned melodic fill while holding down the previously picked notes in the E♭maj7 shape. If these "pretzel knot" fingerings feel too awkward to you, consider playing the chords conventionally, fretting the B-string notes with your pinkie and temporarily borrowing it to fret the first two notes of beat 4.

At the 1st interlude (section C), Jabs plays a short, lyrical lead melody over the repeating intro progression, employing shimmering finger vibratos, slides and bends as expressive elements. Notice how he cranks up his pickup's volume control for his second phrase, beginning in bar 12.

Throughout the song, both guitarists make fantastic use of *bend vibratos* in their leads, applying vibrato to a bent note. This is done by repeatedly releasing the bend by only a quarter step and restoring it up to the target pitch in a quick, even rhythm. It's a highly refined technique that takes a lot of practice and critical listening to master. Bend with your 3rd finger, supported one fret below by the 2nd finger, and hook your thumb around the top side of the fretboard.

"SAVE ME"
Jelly Roll

SOMETIMES A SIMPLE, emotive song can move listeners as much as a great guitar solo, if not more so. "Save Me" is one such song. Jelly Roll's poignant ballad of yearning for personal redemption includes only one basic but tender and expressive acoustic guitar part, played by co-songwriter David Ray, with a little bit of subtle piano added during the choruses.

Using a handful of stock open chords in the key of C, Ray crafts an effective accompaniment based on a repeating progression that varies slightly as the song unfolds. All the chords are easy to finger, except for the "big" Fmaj7 shape, which involves thumb-fretting the low F root note on the 6th string. If you have trouble doing this, simply omit this lowest note and strum the other five strings while avoiding the 6th string. For added insurance against an unwanted open low E note sounding, lightly touch and mute the unused bottom string with the tip of your 3rd finger as it frets the 5th string.

The more challenging aspect of playing "Save Me" is the picking. Ray fingerpicks triplet arpeggios with his thumb and fingers during the intro, verse and post-chorus and switches to strumming with his index finger for the pre-chorus and chorus. When strumming, touch your thumb to your index finger, as if you were holding a plectrum.

The arpeggiation is a repeating six-note pattern that's applied to each chord and includes changes in direction and a couple of string skips. Consider using your thumb to pick all the G-string notes, in addition to the bass notes. While seemingly simple, it's all too easy to accidentally pick an unintended string at some point, if your control falters. Fortunately, in this case any "wrong" note would be an agreeable chord tone.

You could alternatively play everything with a pick, or employ *hybrid picking* to perform the arpeggios, using flatpicked downstrokes on the bottom four strings in tandem with fingerpicking on the top two strings, then switch to pick strumming at the pre-chorus. Whichever technique you opt to use, try lightly resting, or anchoring, your pinkie to the pickguard for added stability and a close tactile point of reference.

"EVEN FLOW"
Pearl Jam

THIS EARLY-NINETIES grunge classic from Pearl Jam's smash debut album features a driving, syncopated 16th-note groove, octave-doubled ensemble riffs, a roaring, mellifluous chorus and some intense blues-rock jamming, all in the key of D.

Guitarist Stone Gossard, who wrote the song with singer Eddie Vedder, plays his parts (Gtr. 1) in open D tuning while co-guitarist Mike McCready, who performs all the lead parts (see Gtrs. 2 and 3) plays in standard tuning, as he channels the bold soloing style of Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Gossard makes great use of his altered tuning by incorporating open strings into his repeating two-bar intro and verse riffs, especially at section B, where he "bounces" fretted notes off the open strings, pulling-off from C to A on the 5th string and sliding up to the 7th-fret A note on the 6th string, which he follows every time with a pair of palm-muted, alternate-picked low Ds.

The descending D blues-scale run (D, F, G, A♭, A, C) in bars 4, 22 and 26 (the $\frac{2}{4}$ bars) can be tricky to finger cleanly in standard tuning (McCready's Gtr. 2 part), due to a quick, descending position shift after the fourth note, G. Notice how the guitarist smartly employs a 1st-finger legato slide from G to F in bar 4. He no doubt similarly shifts his fret hand in bar 22, although the slide here is masked by his use of a wah effect and the fact that he picks both notes.

For the song's choruses (see sections C and E), Gossard again takes advantage of his open D tuning as he conveniently and musically uses his bottom three open strings as a "free" passing chord, which buys his fret hand a little bit of invaluable time to easily shift from the barred D shape at the 12th fret down to B♭sus2 at the 8th fret. Particularly cool is the way the guitarist adds the Jimmy Page-like ♯11 note, E (3rd string, 10th fret), as a bittersweet color tone to B♭5 (B♭5♯11) in bars 28, 29, 32, 33, 36 and 37. This exotic-sounding chordal "extension," which may also be thought of as B♭sus♯4, meshes beautifully with McCready's half-step whammy bar dips in these bars, which briefly add the major 7th, A, to the harmony.

"STILL LOVING YOU"

Scorpions

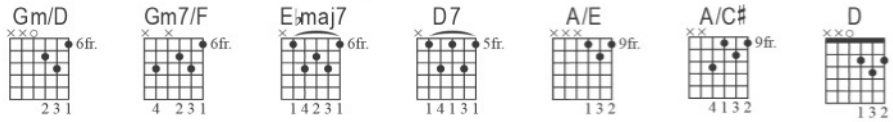
As heard on **LOVE AT FIRST STING**

Words and music by RUDOLF SCHENKER *and* KLAUS MEINE • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

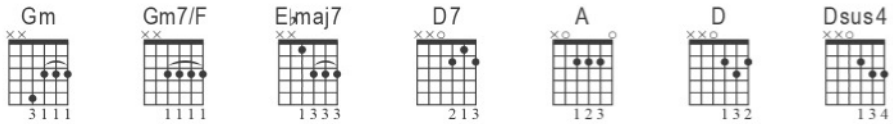
All guitars are in standard tuning.
Bass is in drop-D tuning (low to high, D, A, D, G).

Note: As a result of the tape playback speed being sped up during the mastering process, all pitches on the recording sound slightly sharp (approx. 50 cents). To play along, tune all strings approx. one quarter-tone sharp.

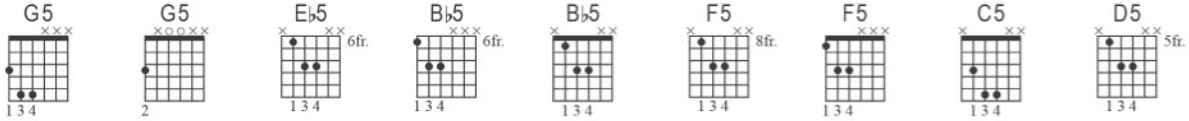
chords for Gtr. 1 (Intro and verse sections)



chords for Gtr. 2 (Intro and verse sections)



Guitars 1 and 2 (chorus)



A **Intro** (0:00)

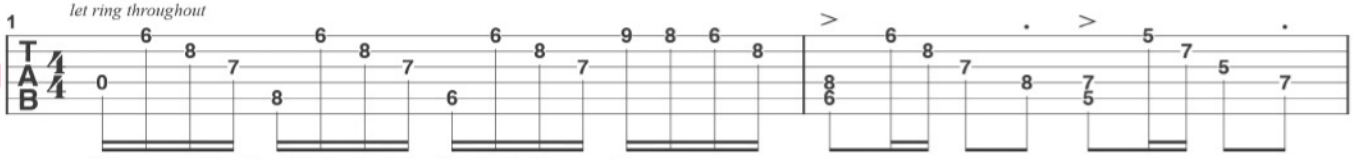
Slowly ♩ = 49

Gm/D Gm/F E♭maj7 D7

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/clean tone*) (Rudolf Schenker)

Rhy. Fig. 1

let ring throughout

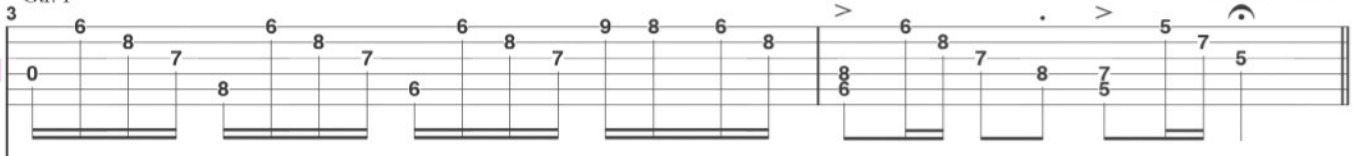


*Clean tone achieved by rolling back guitar's volume knob with an overdriven amp.

Gm/D Gm/F E♭maj7 D7

Gtr. 1

end Rhy. Fig. 1



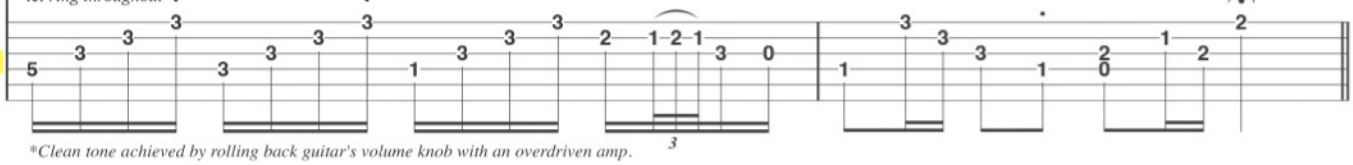
Gm Gm7/F E♭maj7 D7

Gtr. 2 (elec. w/clean tone*) (Matthias Jabs)

Rhy. Fig. 2

let ring throughout

end Rhy. Fig. 2



*Clean tone achieved by rolling back guitar's volume knob with an overdriven amp.

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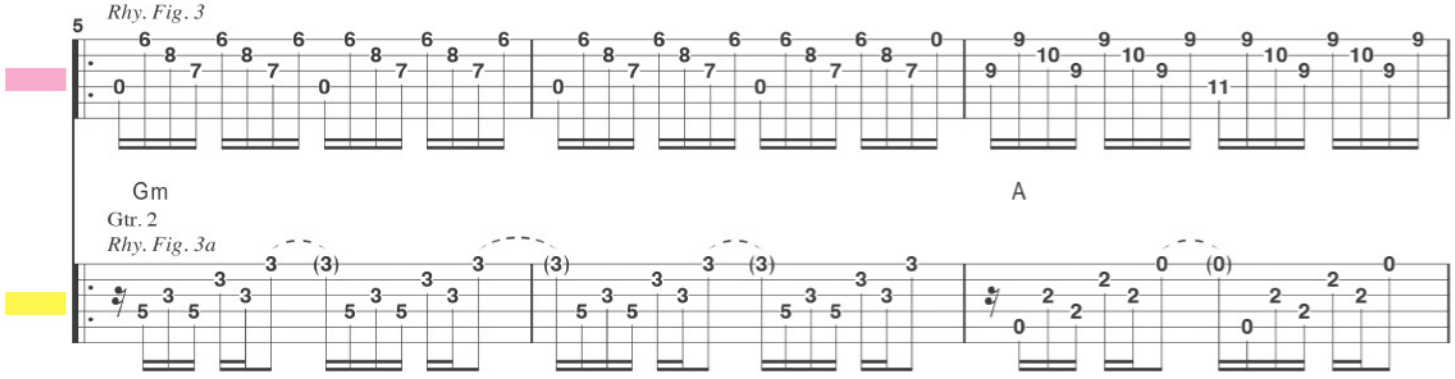
B **1st Verse** (0:22)

Time it needs time to win back your love again I will be there I will be
Love only love can bring back your love someday I will be there I will be

Gm/D A/E A/C♯

Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 3



Gm A

Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 3a

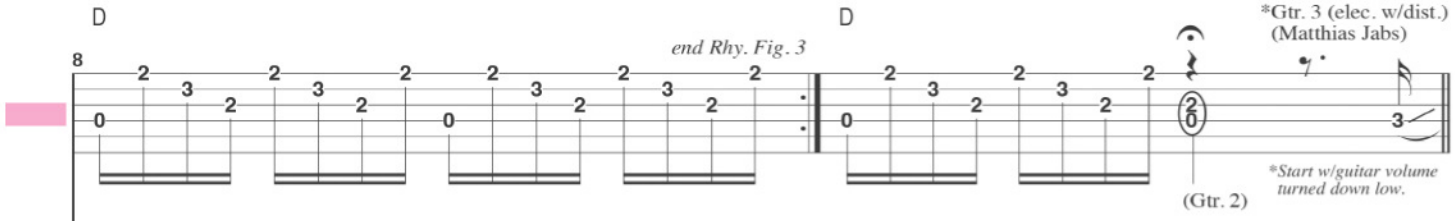
1. 2.

there there

D D

*Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)
(Matthias Jabs)

end Rhy. Fig. 3

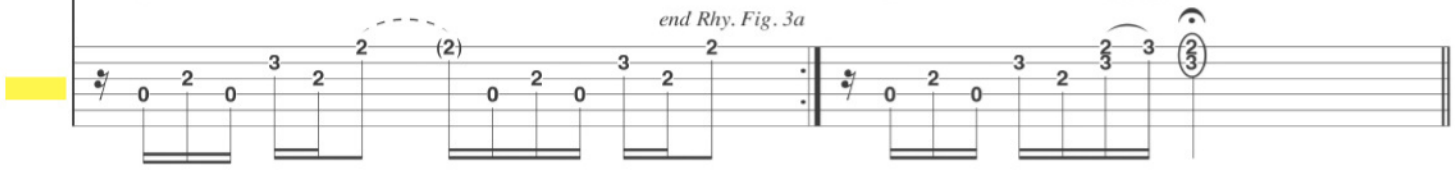


*Start w/guitar volume turned down low.

(Gtr. 2)

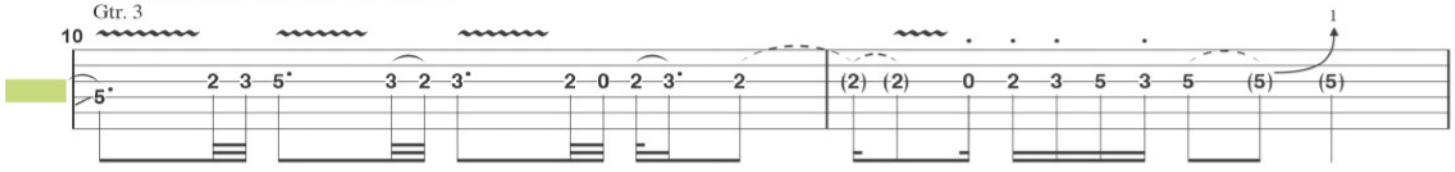
D D Dsus4 D

end Rhy. Fig. 3a

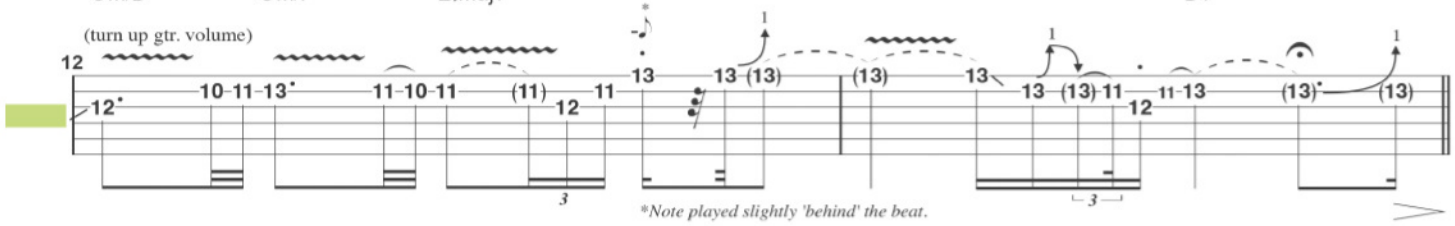


C **1st Interlude** (1:00)

Gm/D Gm/F E♭maj7 D7

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 1)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 3)
Gtr. 3

Gm/D Gm/F E♭maj7 D7

(turn up gtr. volume)



*Note played slightly 'behind' the beat.

D **2nd Verse** (1:23) (♩ = 51)

Fight babe I'll fight to win back your love again I will be
Love only love can break down the wall someday I will be

Gm/D

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 (see bar 5)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3a (see bar 5)

Bass
Bass Fig. 1

14

1.
there I will be there
A/E A/C♯ D

16 *end Bass Fig. 1*

2.
there I will be there
A/E A/C♯ D

Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fill 1

18

A D

Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fill 1a

Bass

E **1st and 2nd Choruses** (2:00, 3:36)

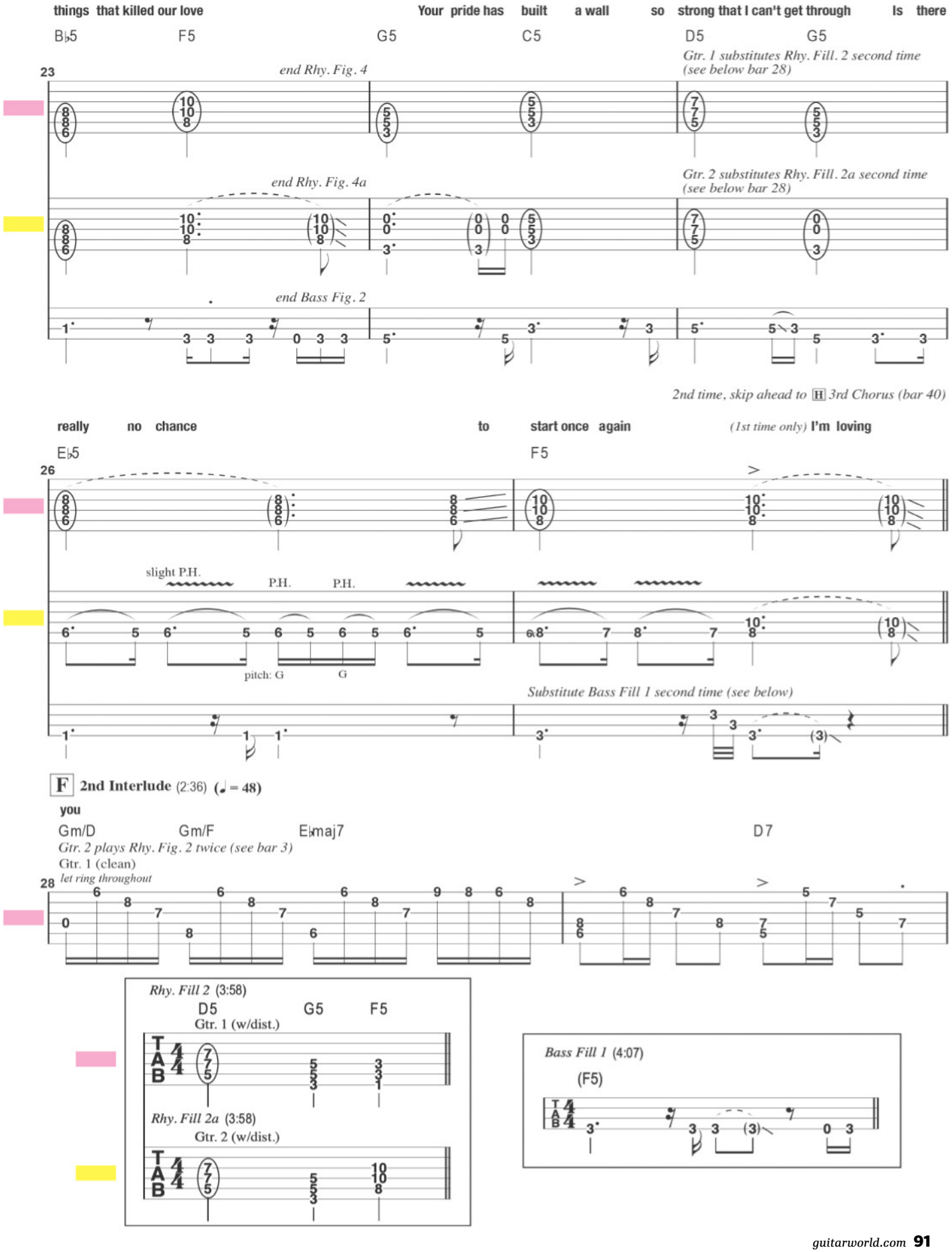
(♩ = 52)

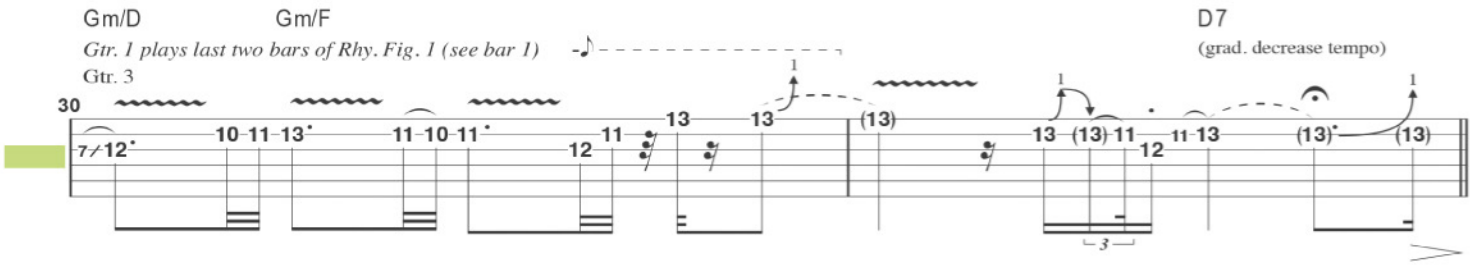
If we go again all the way from the start I would try to change the
G5 E♭5 B♭5 F5 G5 E♭5

Rhy. Fig. 4
20 w/dist.

Rhy. Fig. 4a
w/dist.

Bass Fig. 2

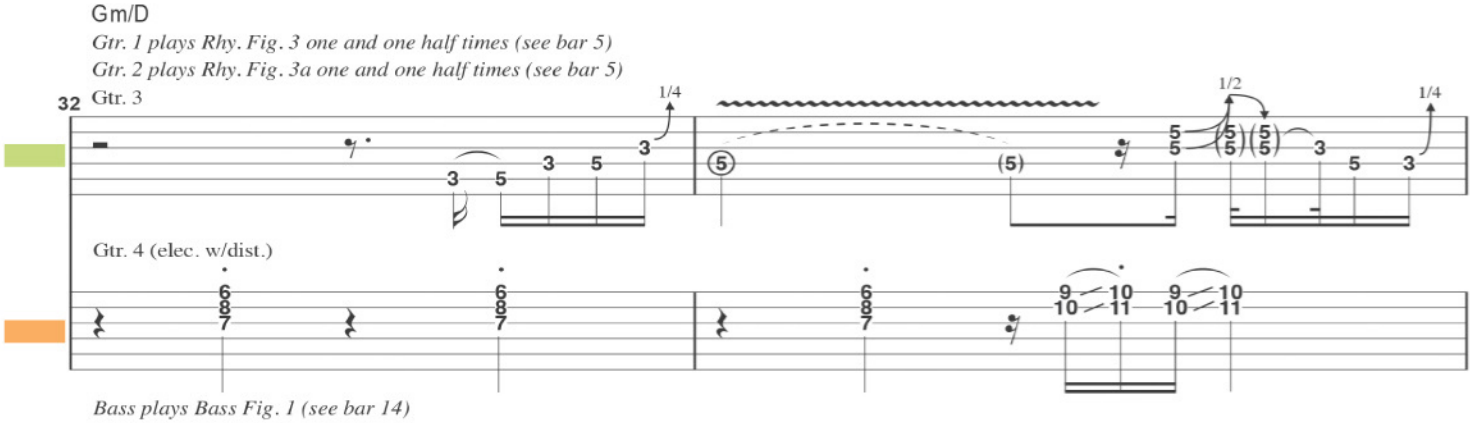

things that killed our love
Your pride has built a wall so strong that I can't get through Is there
B♭5 F5 G5 C5 D5 G5
23
end Rhy. Fig. 4
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 2 second time (see below bar 28)
end Rhy. Fig. 4a
Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 2a second time (see below bar 28)
end Bass Fig. 2
2nd time, skip ahead to H 3rd Chorus (bar 40)
really no chance to start once again (1st time only) I'm loving
E♭5 F5
26
slight P.H.
P.H.
P.H.
pitch: G G
Substitute Bass Fill 1 second time (see below)
F 2nd Interlude (2:36) (♩ = 48)
you
Gm/D Gm/F E♭maj7 D7
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 3)
Gtr. 1 (clean)
let ring throughout
28
Rhy. Fill 2 (3:58)
D5 G5 F5
Gtr. 1 (w/dist.)
Rhy. Fill 2a (3:58)
Gtr. 2 (w/dist.)
Bass Fill 1 (4:07)
(F5)



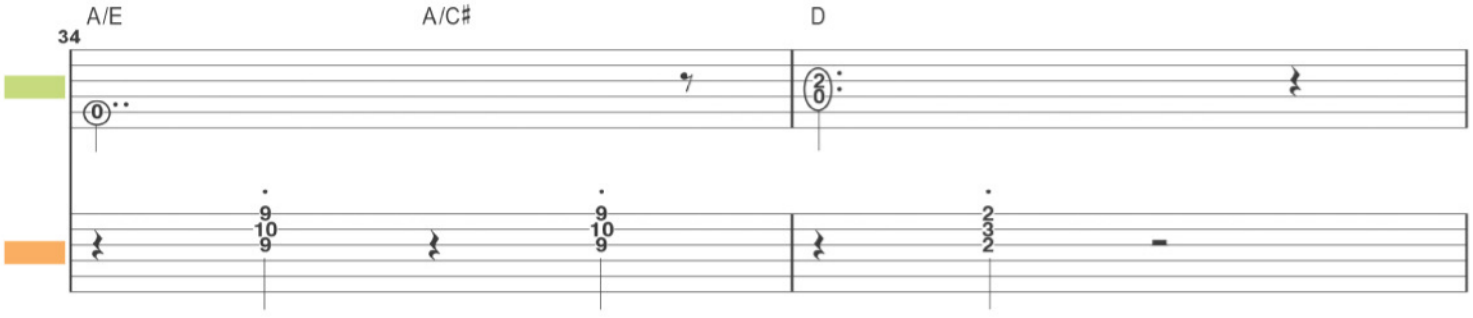
G **3rd Verse** (2:59)

(♩ = 52)

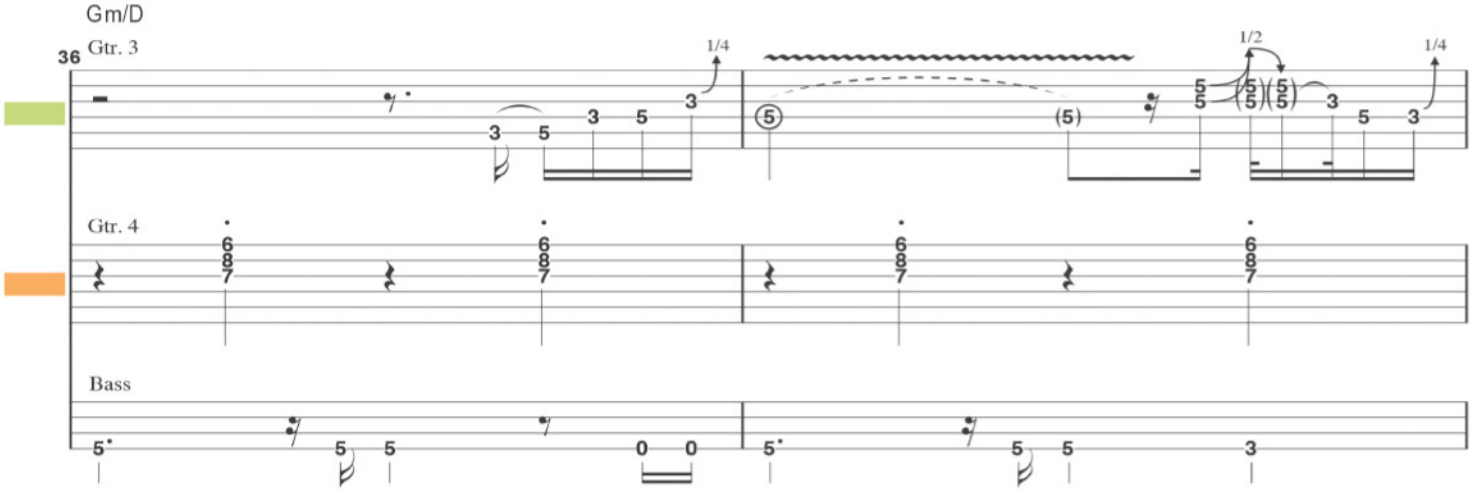
Try baby try to trust in my love again I will be



there I will be there



Love our love just shouldn't be thrown away I will be



Go back to E 2nd Chorus (bar 20)

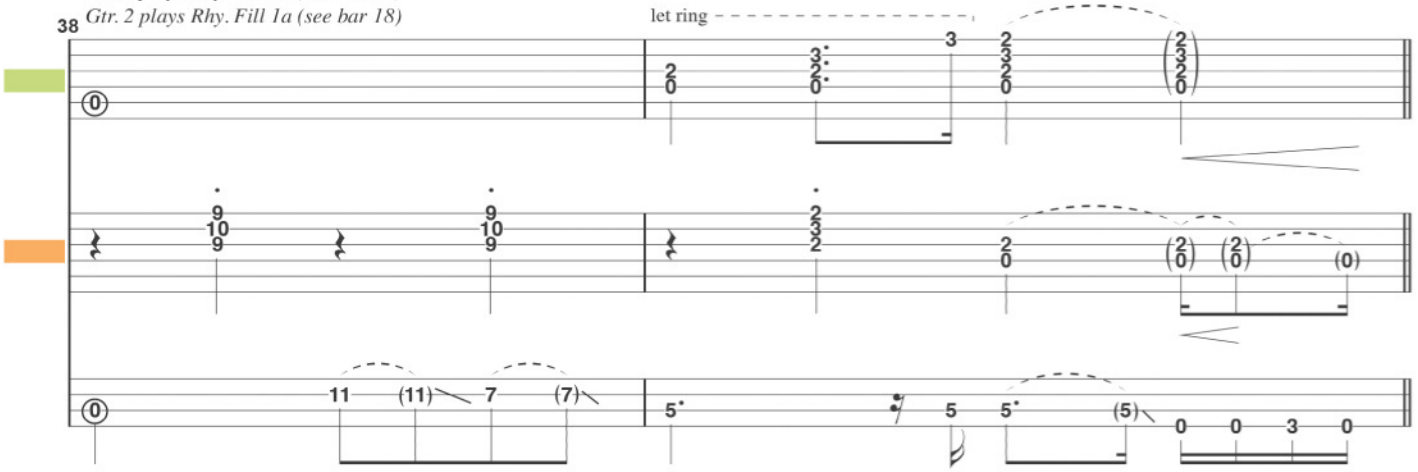
there I will be there

A/E A/C♯ D

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fill 1a (see bar 18)

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fill 1a (see bar 18)

38 let ring



H 3rd Chorus (4:11)

If we go again all the way from the start I would try to change the things that killed our love

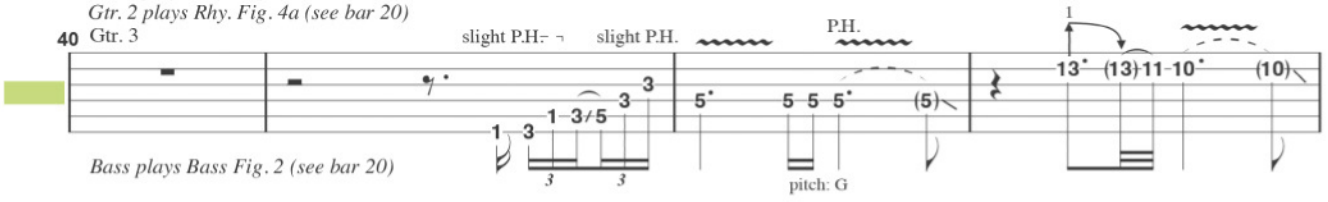
G5 E♭5 B♭5 F5 G5 E♭5 B♭5 F5

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 (see bar 20)

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 4a (see bar 20)

40 Gtr. 3

slight P.H. slight P.H. P.H.



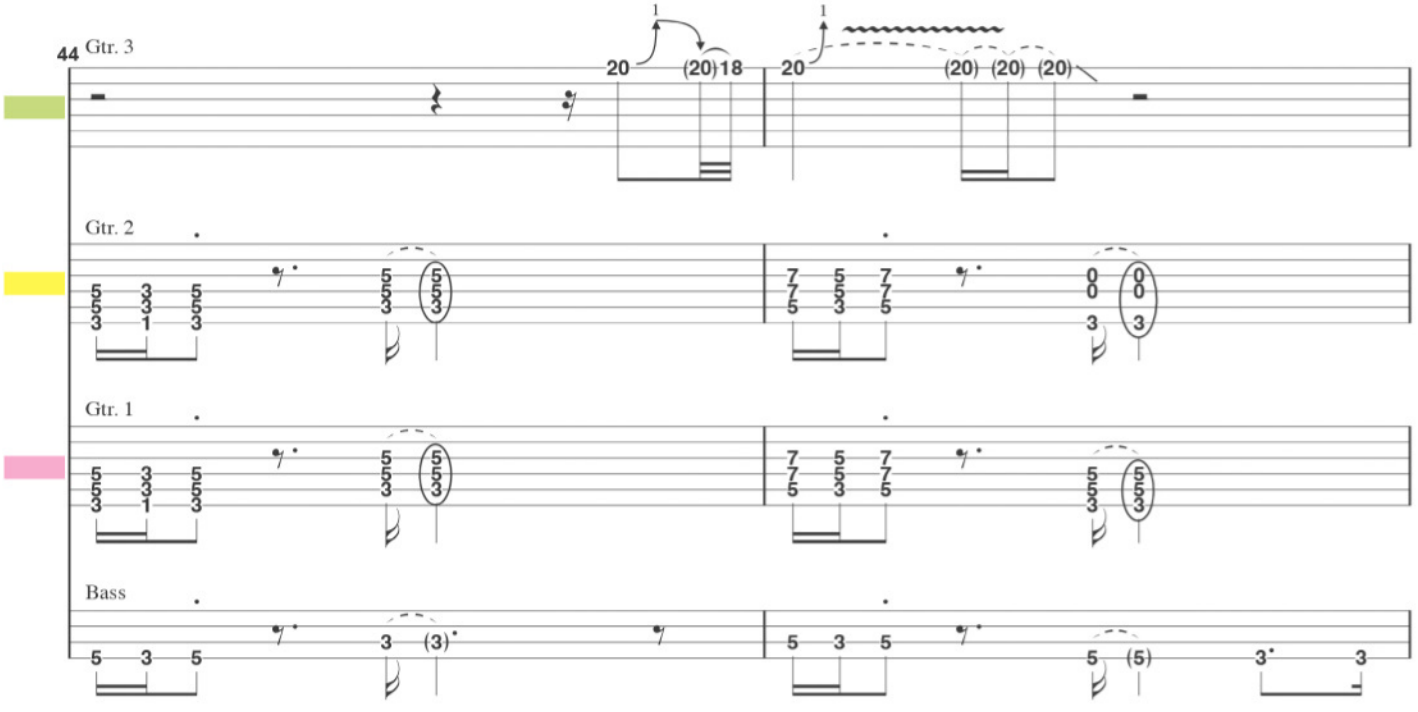
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 20)

pitch: G

Yes I've hurt your pride and I know what you've been through You should

G5 F5 G5 C5 D5 C5 D5 G5

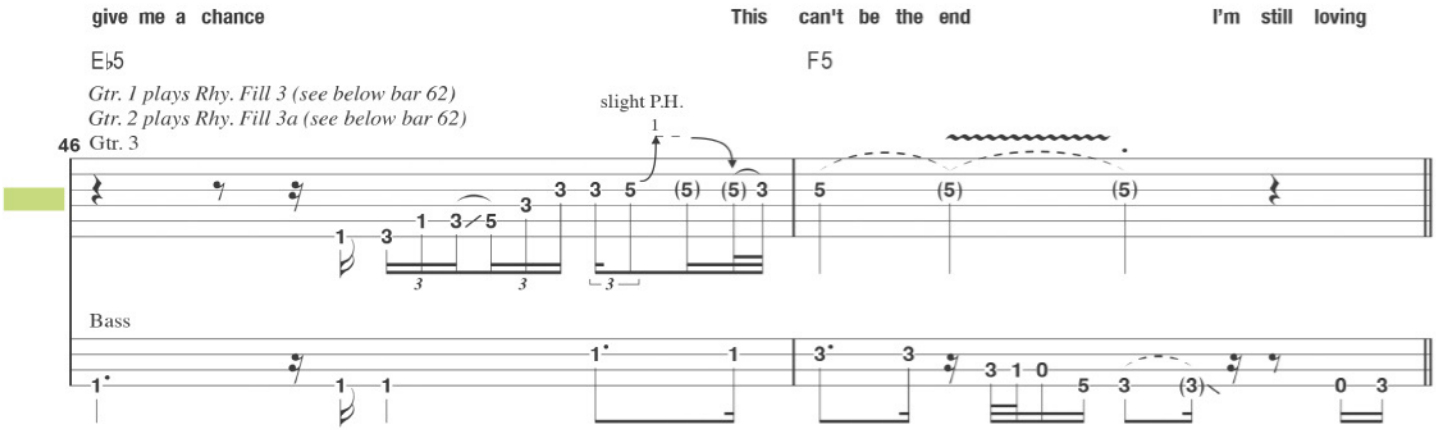
44 Gtr. 3



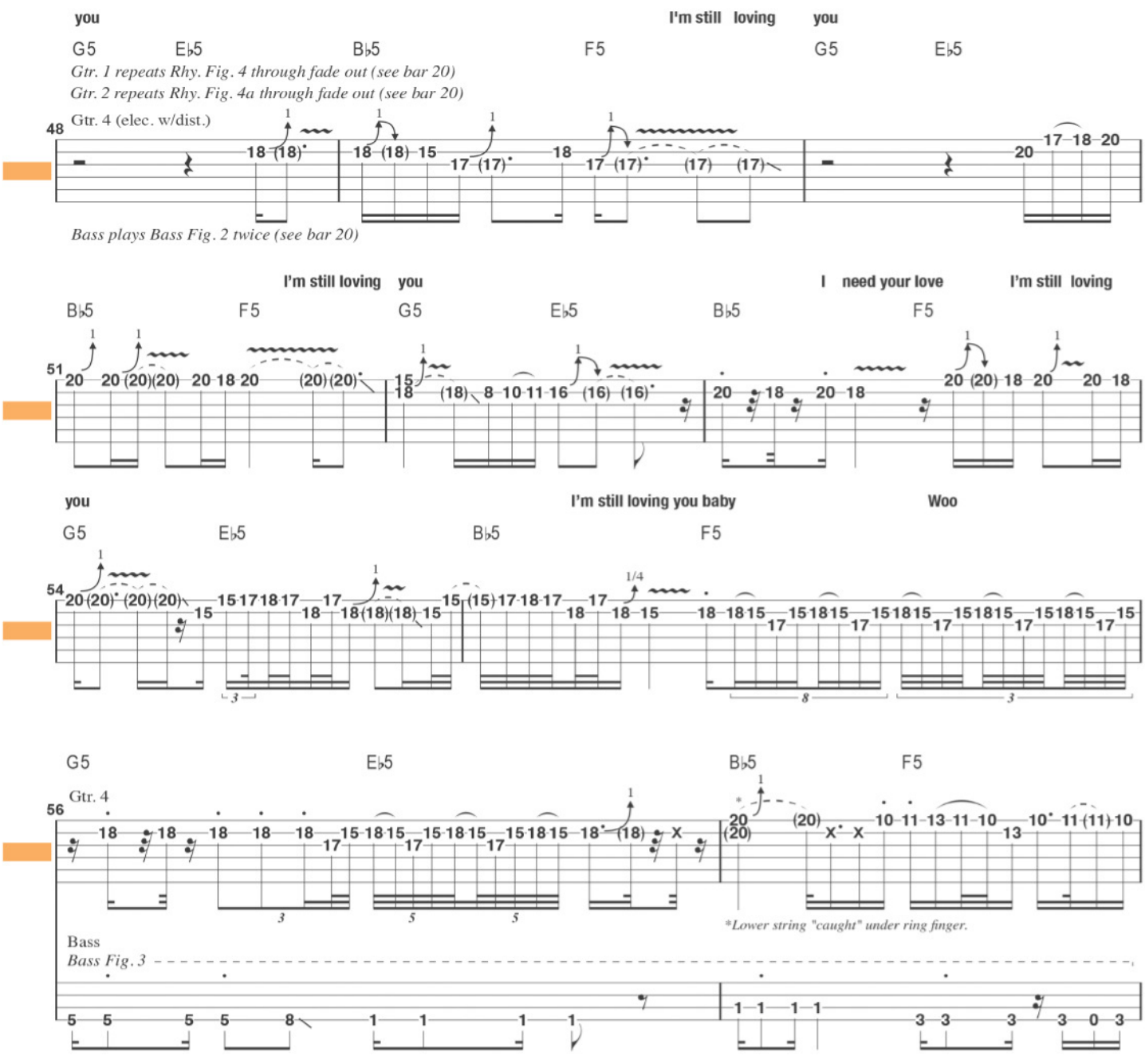
Gtr. 2

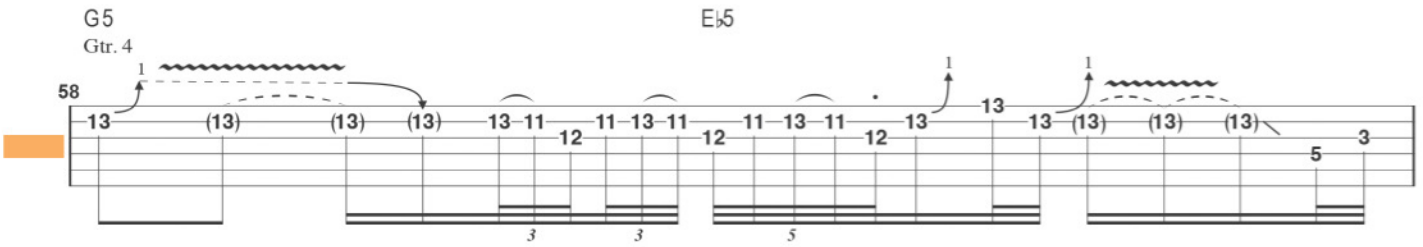
Gtr. 1

Bass

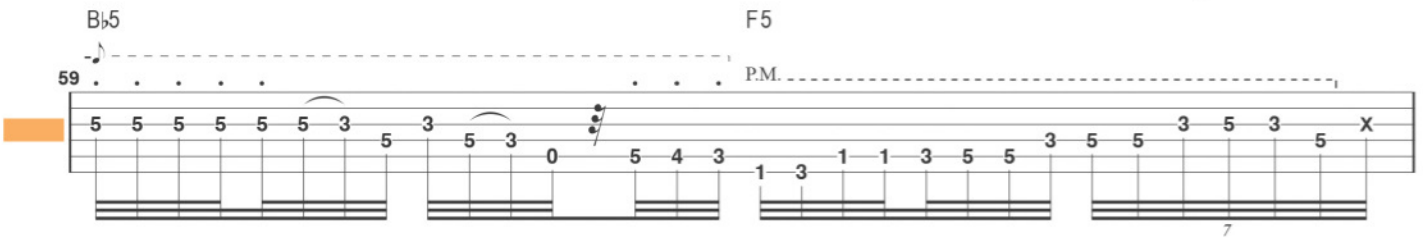


I Outro Solo (Schenker) (4:46)

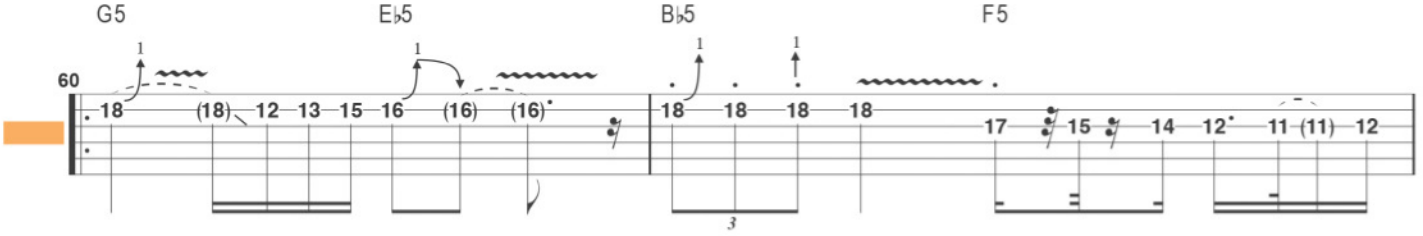




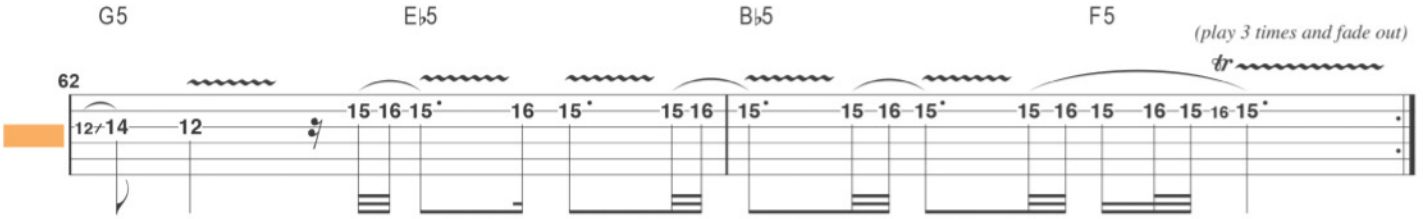
I'm still loving

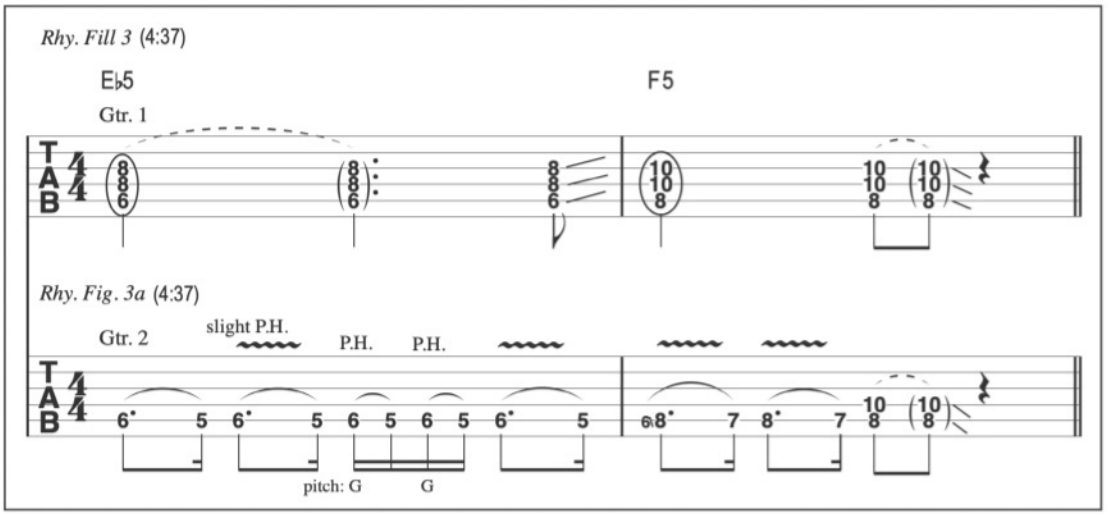


you I need your love I'm still loving
I'm still loving
I need your love



you I need your love Woo
you I need your love Woo
I need your love



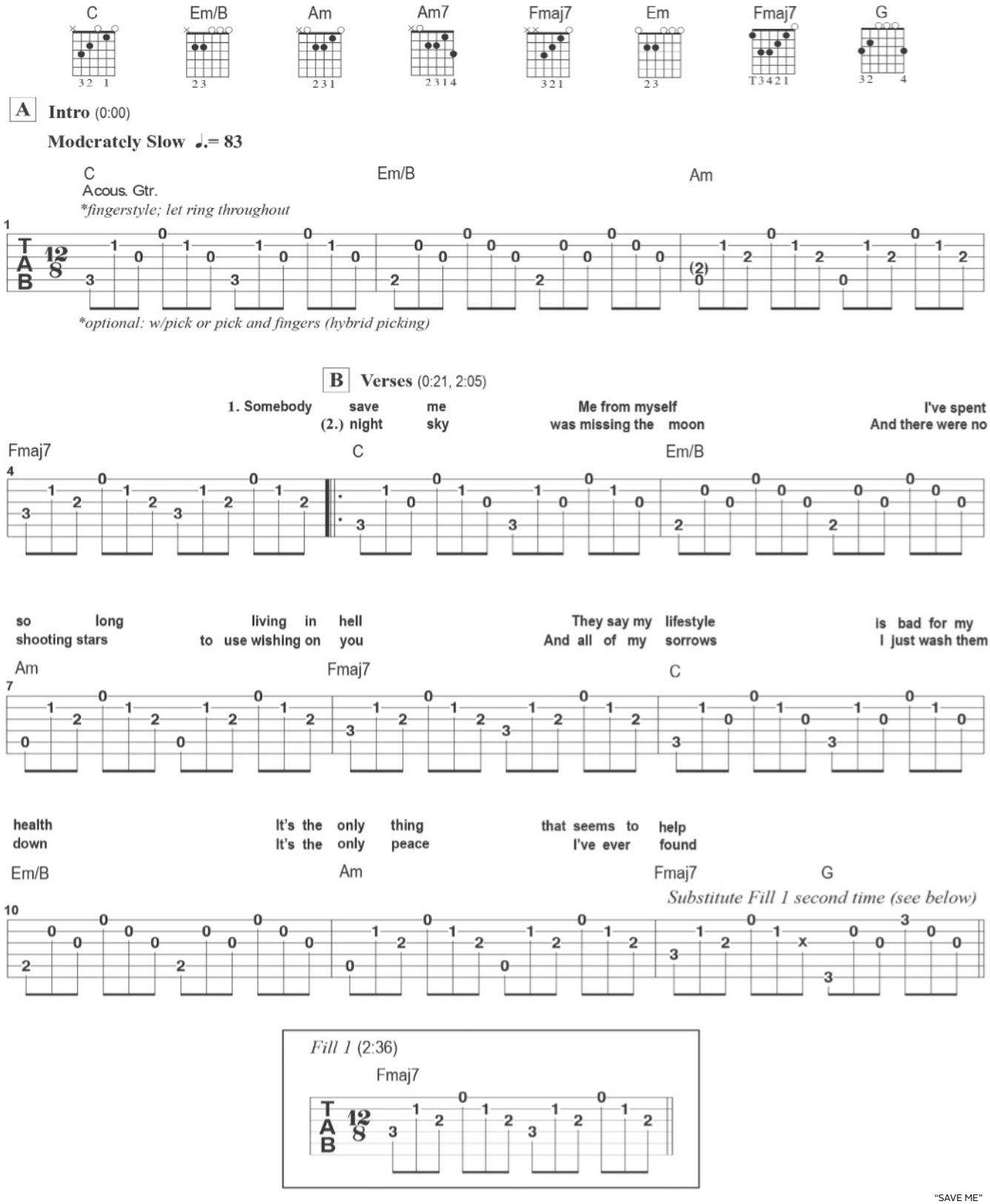


"SAVE ME"

Jelly Roll

As heard on **SELF MEDICATED**

Words and Music by **JASON BRADLEY DEFORD** *and* **DAVID RAY STEVENS** *Transcribed by* **JIMMY BROWN**



"SAVE ME"
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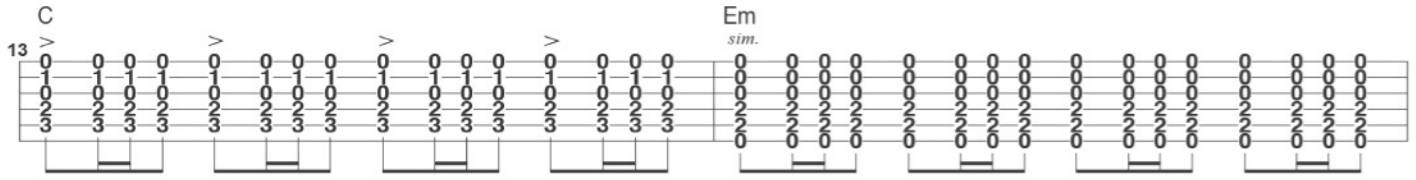
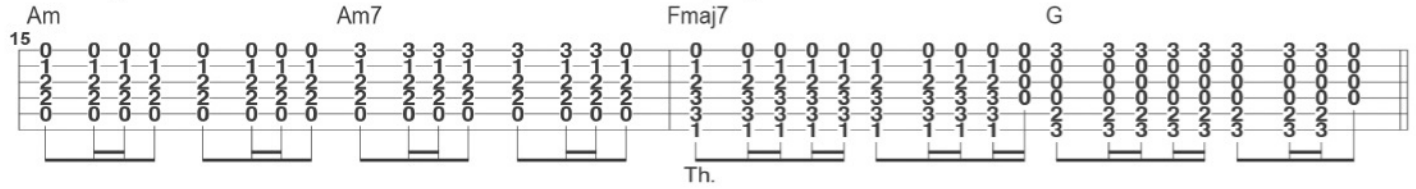
C **Pre-chorus** (0:56, 2:40)

All of this drinkin' and smokin' is hopeless but feel like it's all that I need

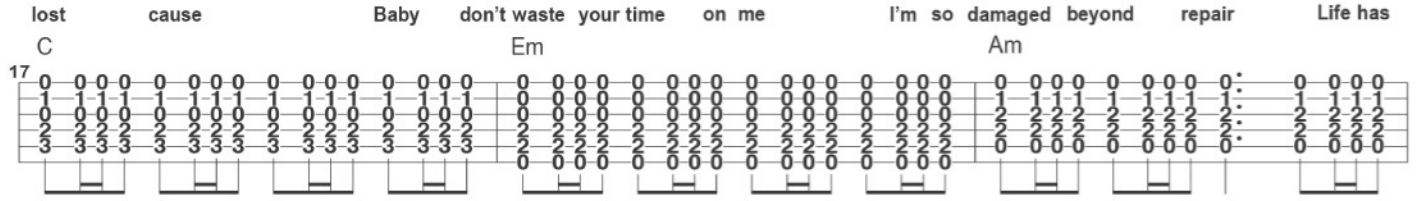


Something inside of me's broken I hold onto anything that sets me free I'm a

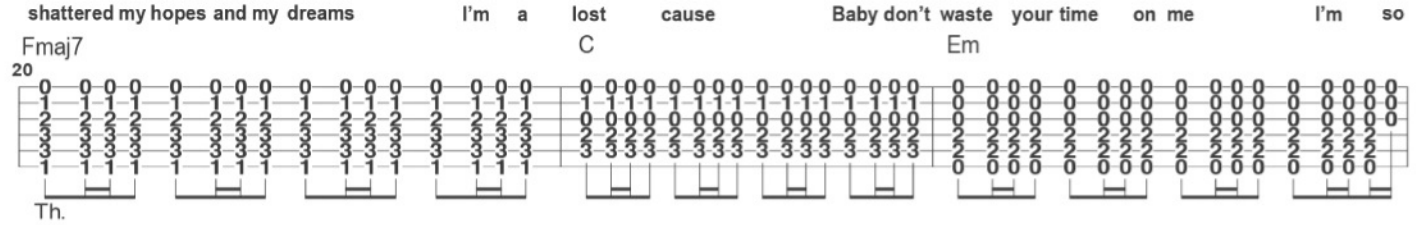


D **Chorus** (1:13, 2:58)

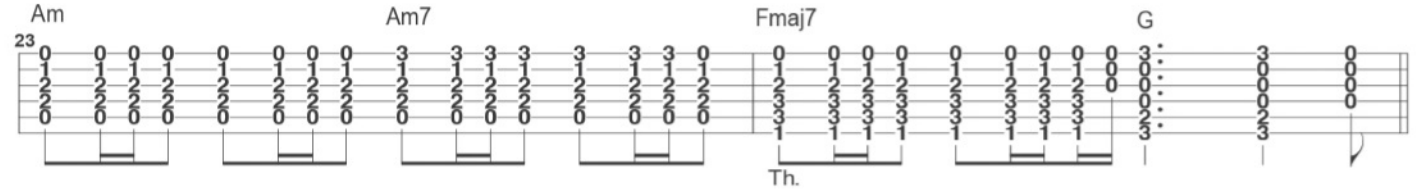
lost cause Baby don't waste your time on me I'm so damaged beyond repair Life has



shattered my hopes and my dreams I'm a lost cause Baby don't waste your time on me I'm so

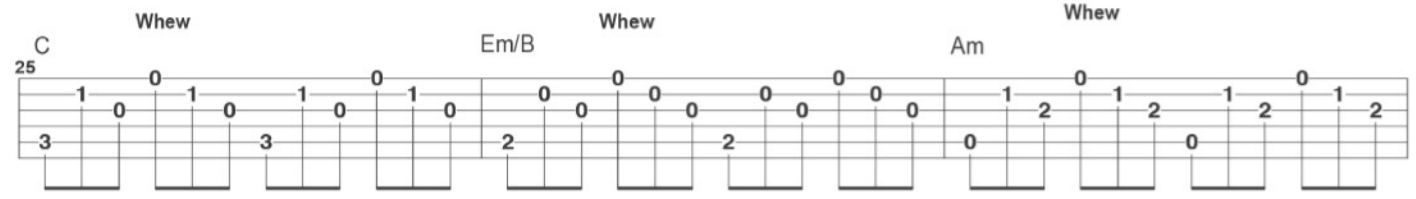


damaged beyond repair Life has shattered my hopes and my dreams



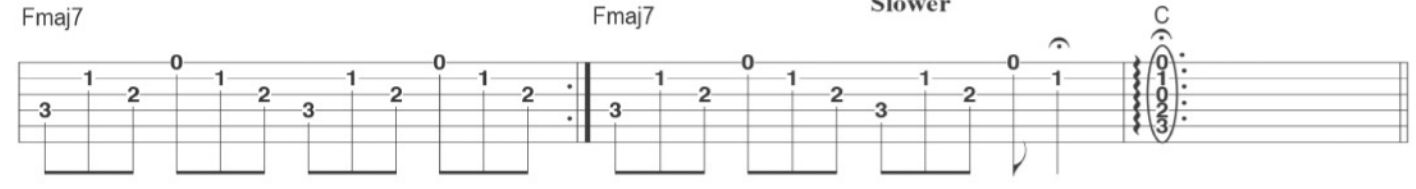
E **Post-chorus** (1:48, 3:33)

Whew Whew Whew



1. *Go back to* **B** *2nd Verse (bar 5)* 2.

Ooh 2. What if the Ooh



"EVEN FLOW"

Pearl Jam

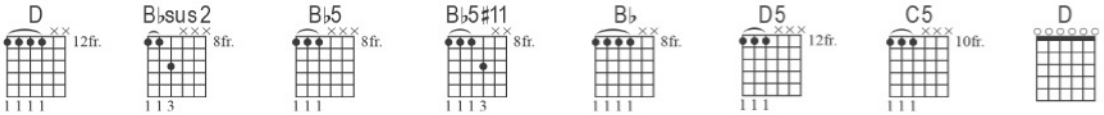
As heard on **TEN**

Words by EDDIE VEDDER • *Music by* STONE GOSSARD • *Transcribed by* JEFF PERRIN

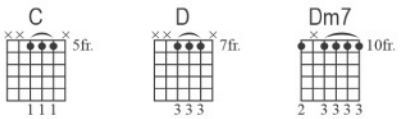
Guitar 1 is in open D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, F♯, A, D).
Guitars 2 and 3 are in standard tuning (low to high: E, A, D, G, B, E).
Bass is in drop-D tuning (low to high: D, A, D, G).

Note: As a result of the tape playback speed being sped up during the mastering process, all pitches on the recording sound slightly sharp (approx. 50 cents). To play along, tune all strings approx. one quarter-tone sharp.

chords for Gtr. 1 (open D tuning)

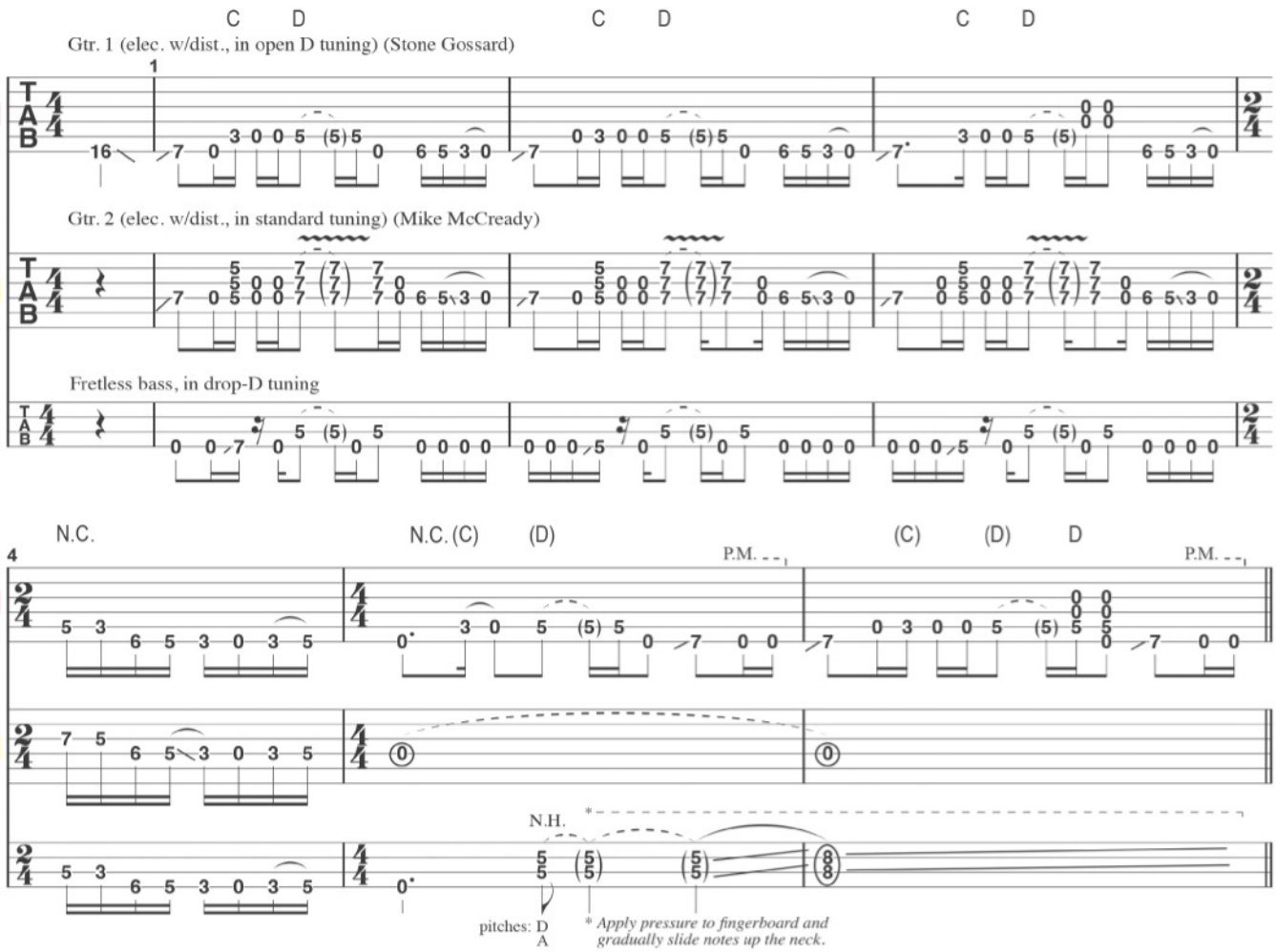


chords for Gtr. 2 (standard tuning)



A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 103



"EVEN FLOW"
WORDS BY EDDIE VEDDER
MUSIC BY STONE GOSSARD
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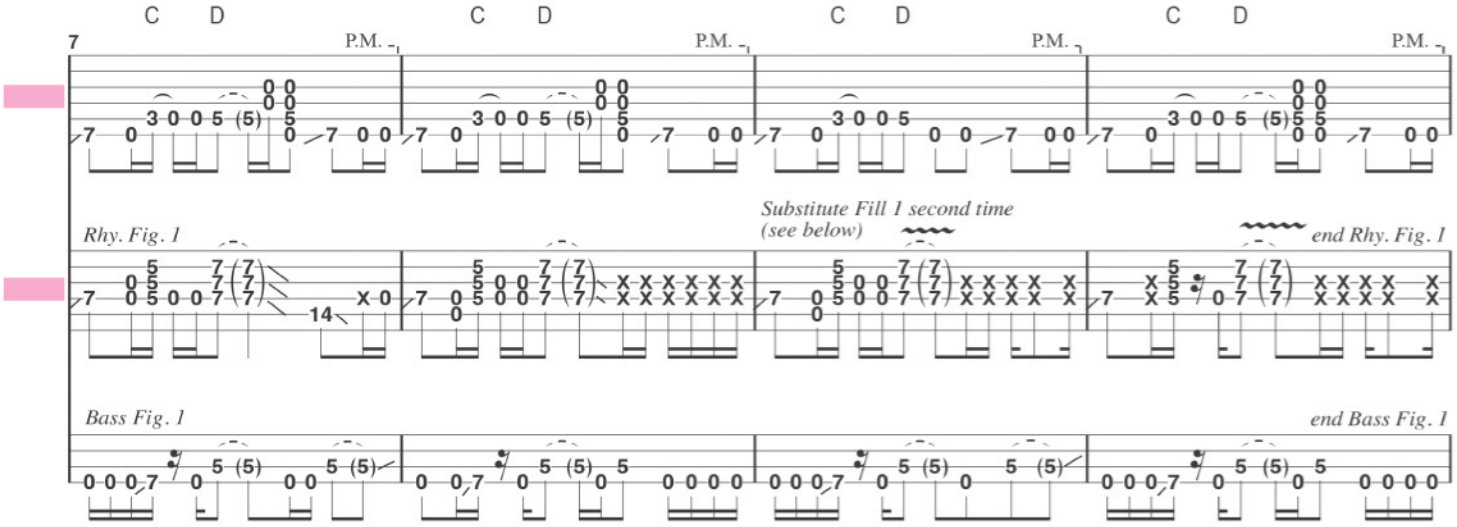
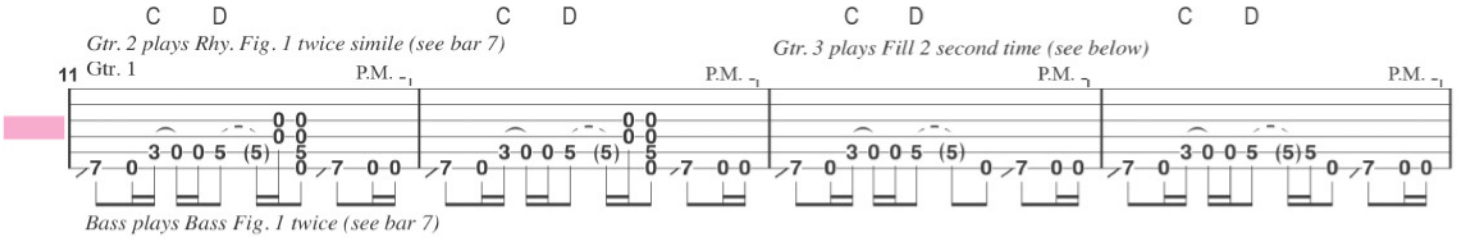
B **1st and 2nd Verses** (0:13, 1:29)

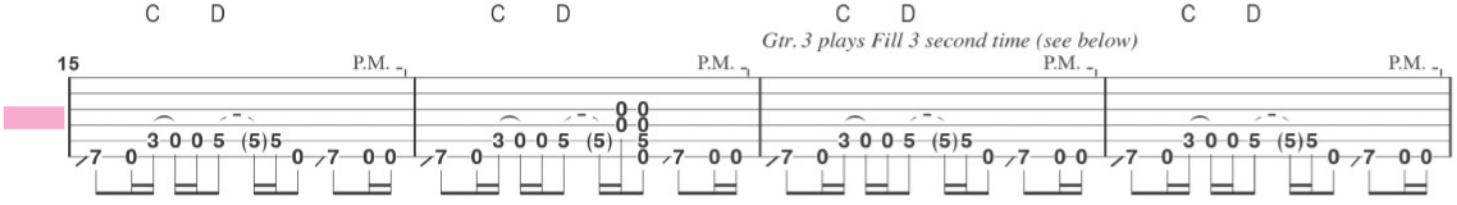
1. Freezin' rests his head on a pillow made of concrete again Oh
2. Kneelin' lookin' through the paper though he doesn't know to read Ooh yeah Oh

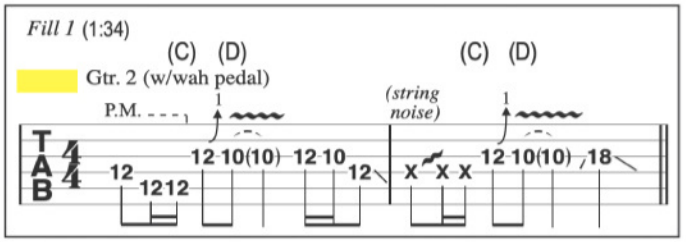


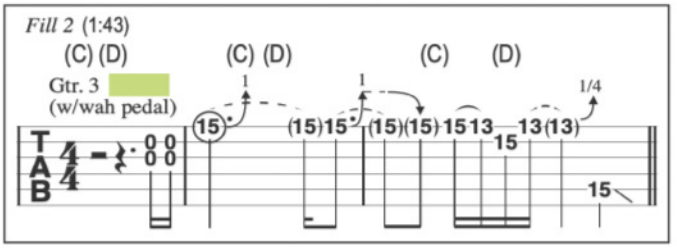
feelin' maybe he'll see a little better set a days Ooh yeah Oh
prayin' now to something that has never showed him anything Oh

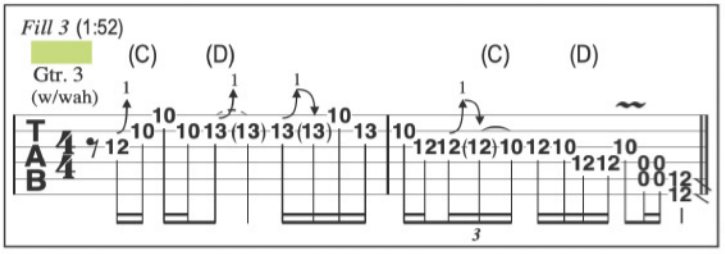


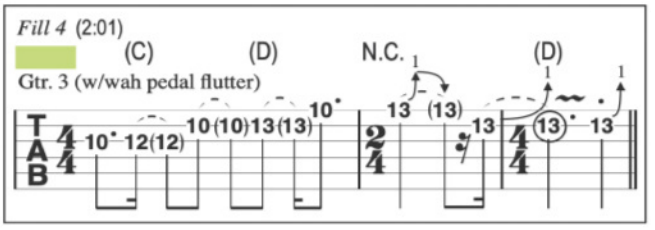
hand out faces that he sees time again ain't that familiar Ooh yeah Oh
feelin' understands the weather of the winter's on its way Oh



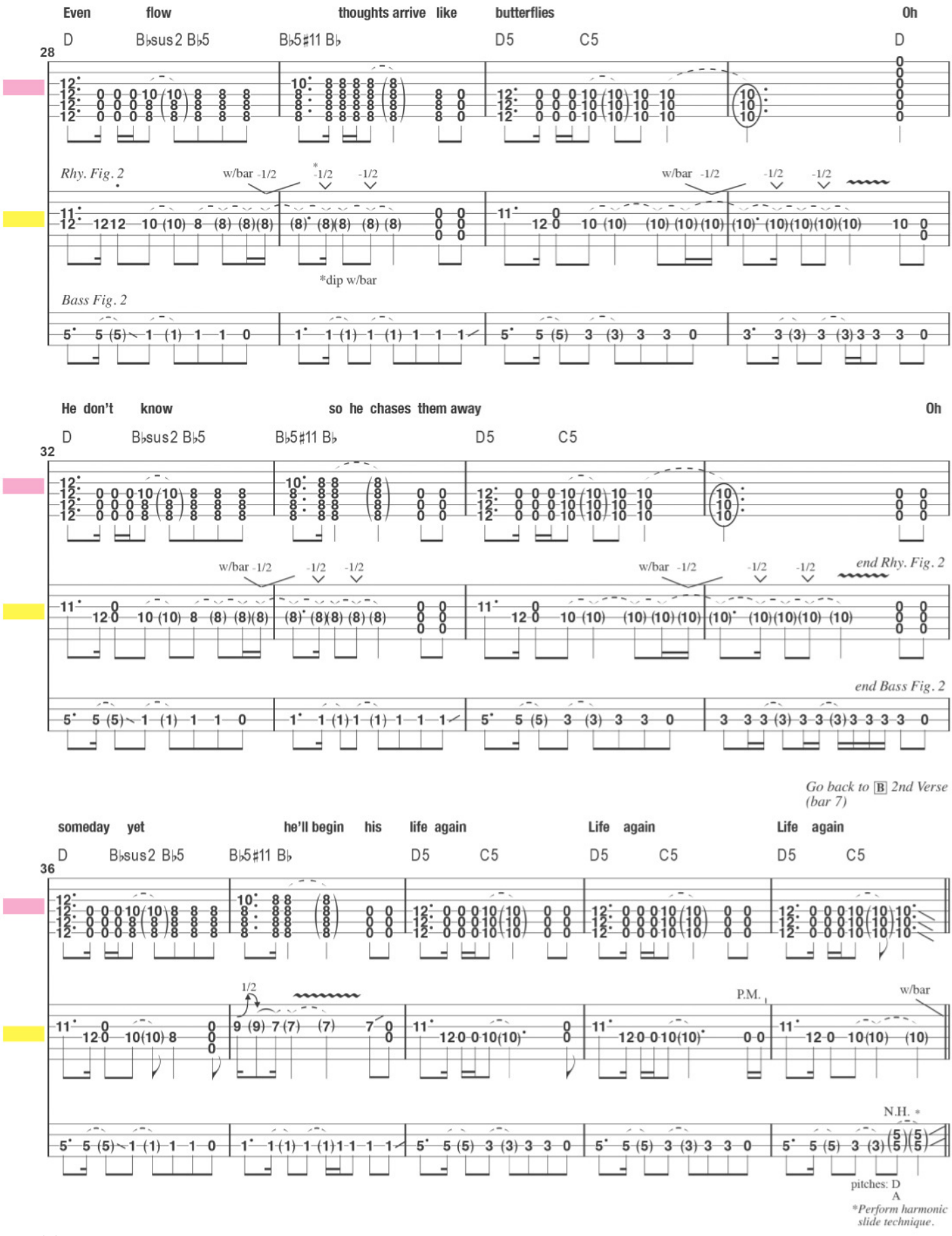








C 1st Chorus (0:59)



C **1st Chorus** (0:59)

Even flow thoughts arrive like butterflies Oh

D B♭sus2 B♭5 B♭5♯11 B♭ D5 C5 D

28

Rhy. Fig. 2

w/bar -1/2 *-1/2 -1/2 w/bar -1/2 -1/2 -1/2

*dip w/bar

Bass Fig. 2

He don't know so he chases them away Oh

D B♭sus2 B♭5 B♭5♯11 B♭ D5 C5

32

w/bar -1/2 -1/2 -1/2 w/bar -1/2 -1/2 -1/2 *end Rhy. Fig. 2*

end Bass Fig. 2

Go back to **B** *2nd Verse (bar 7)*

someday yet he'll begin his life again Life again Life again

D B♭sus2 B♭5 B♭5♯11 B♭ D5 C5 D5 C5 D5 C5

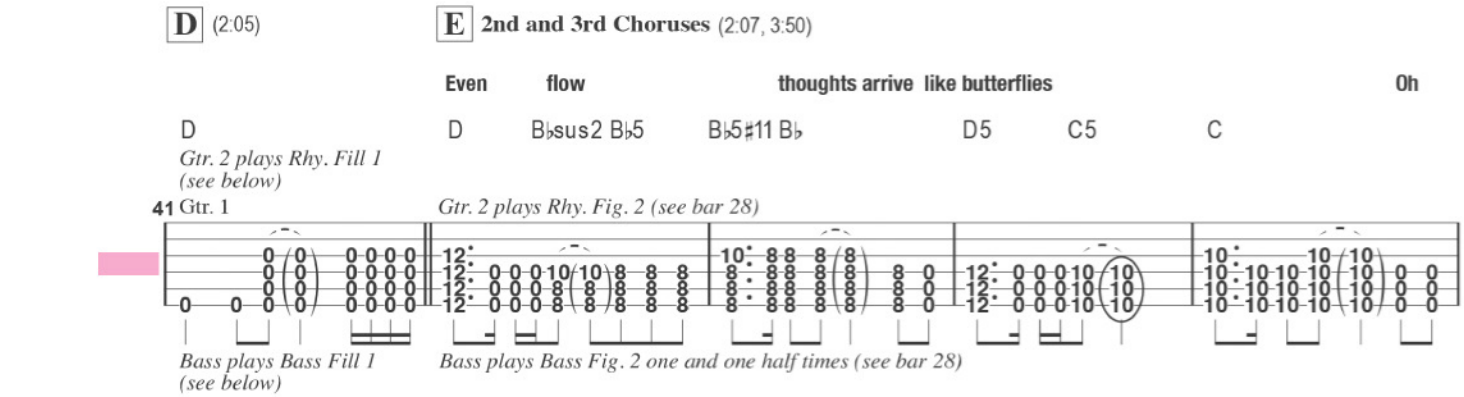
36

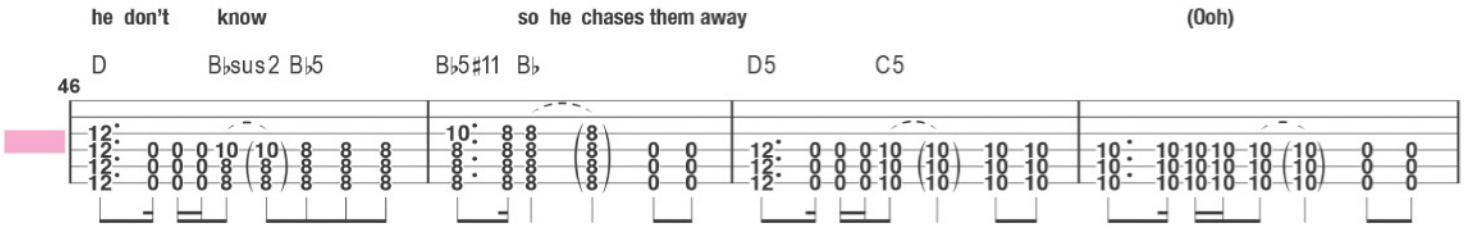
1/2 P.M. w/bar

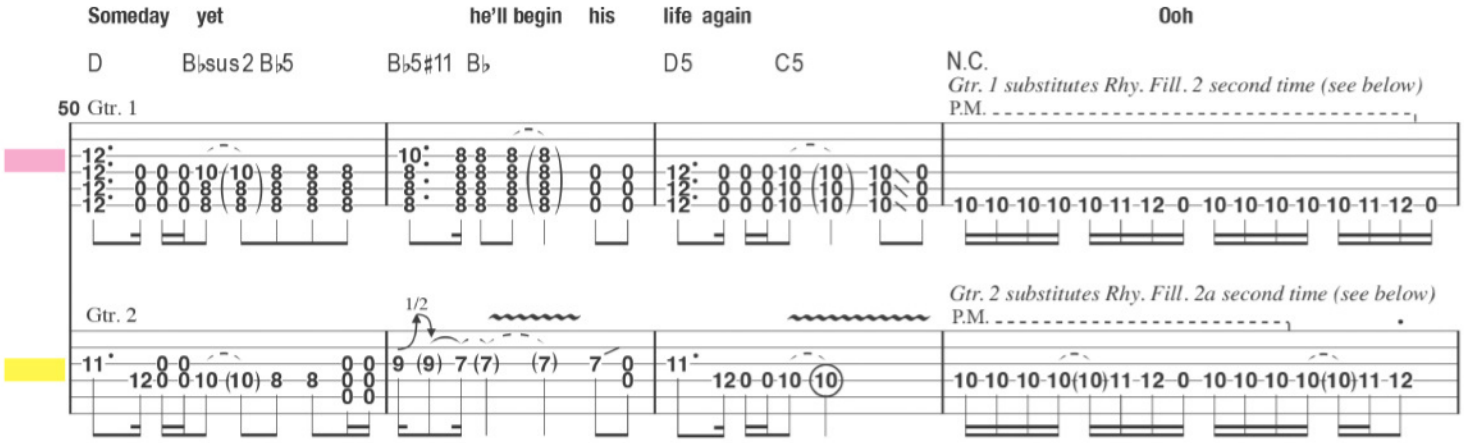
N.H. *

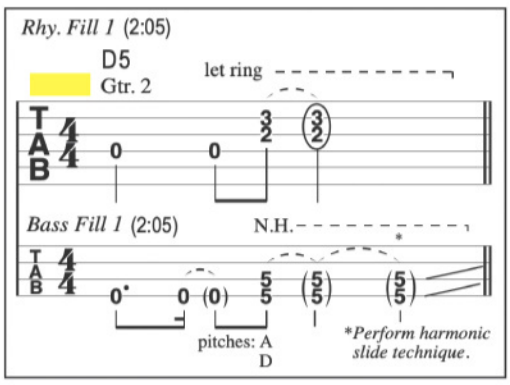
pitches: D A

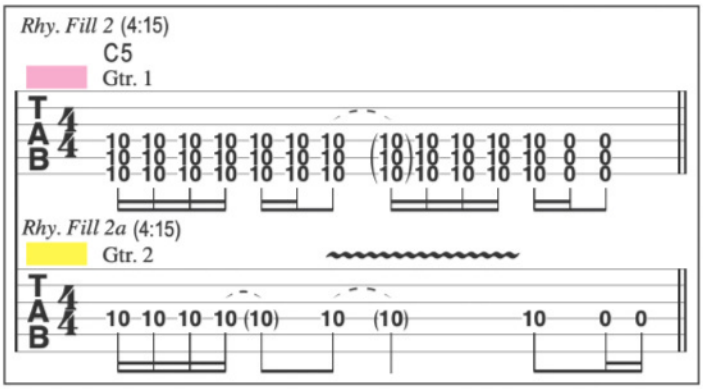
**Perform harmonic slide technique.*

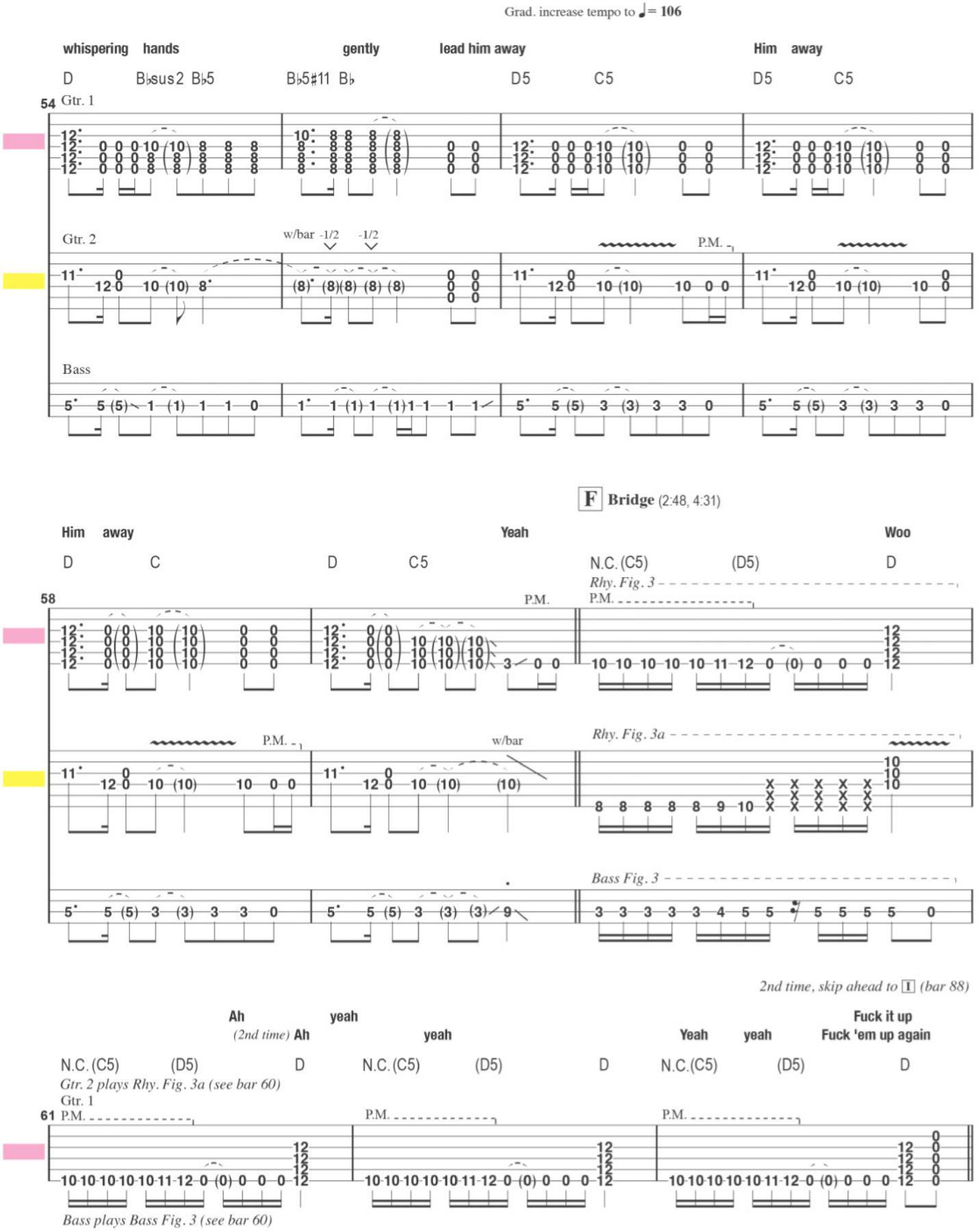

D (2:05)
E 2nd and 3rd Choruses (2:07, 3:50)
Even flow thoughts arrive like butterflies Oh
D B♭sus2 B♭5 B♭5♯11 B♭ D5 C5 C
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fill 1 (see below)
41 Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 28)
Bass plays Bass Fill 1 (see below)
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 one and one half times (see bar 28)


he don't know so he chases them away (Ooh)
D B♭sus2 B♭5 B♭5♯11 B♭ D5 C5
46


Someday yet he'll begin his life again Ooh
D B♭sus2 B♭5 B♭5♯11 B♭ D5 C5 N.C.
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 2 second time (see below)
50 Gtr. 1
P.M.
Gtr. 2
1/2
Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 2a second time (see below)
P.M.

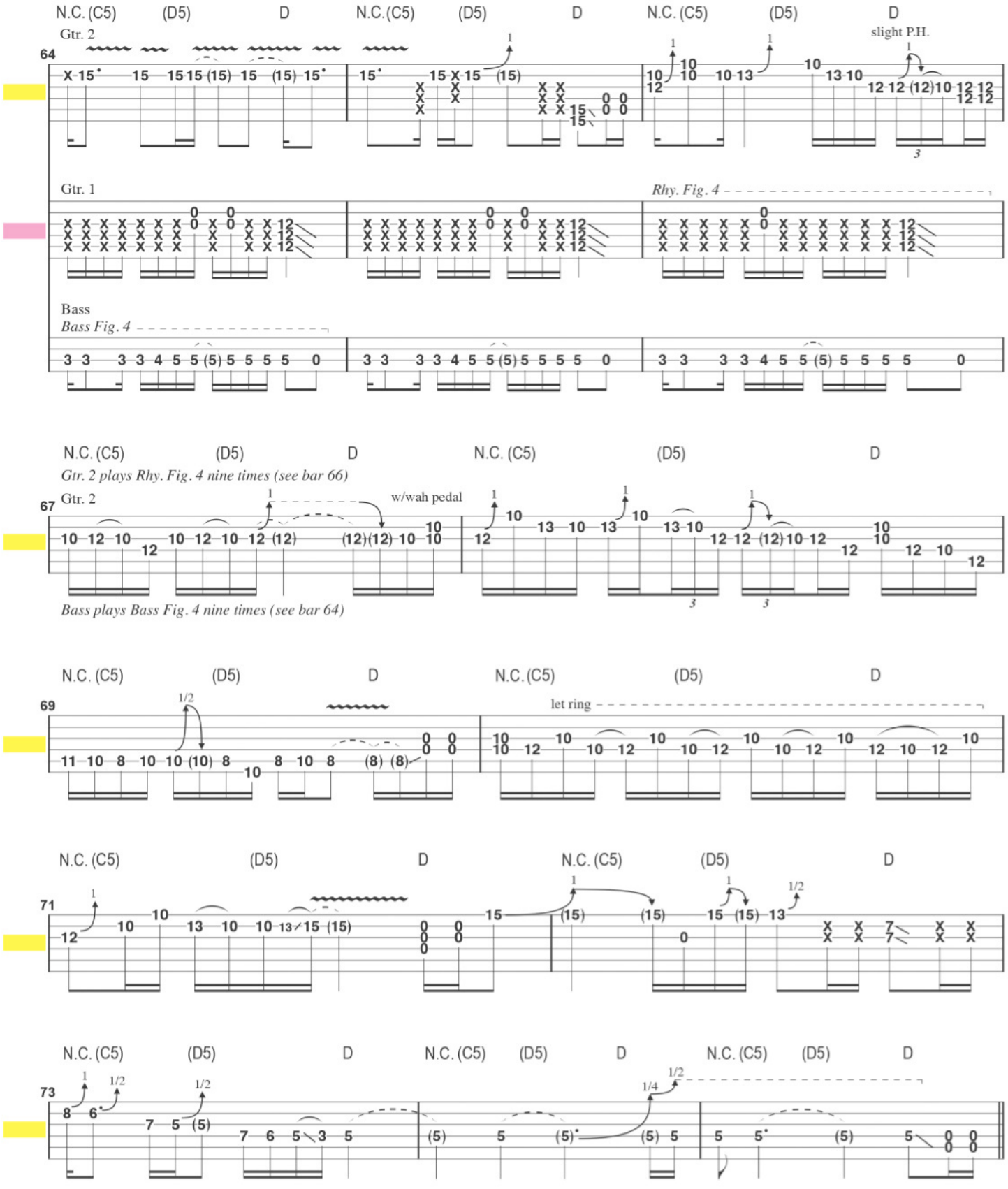

Rhy. Fill 1 (2:05)
D5
Gtr. 2
let ring
Bass Fill 1 (2:05)
N.H.
pitches: A D
*Perform harmonic slide technique.


Rhy. Fill 2 (4:15)
C5
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fill 2a (4:15)
Gtr. 2

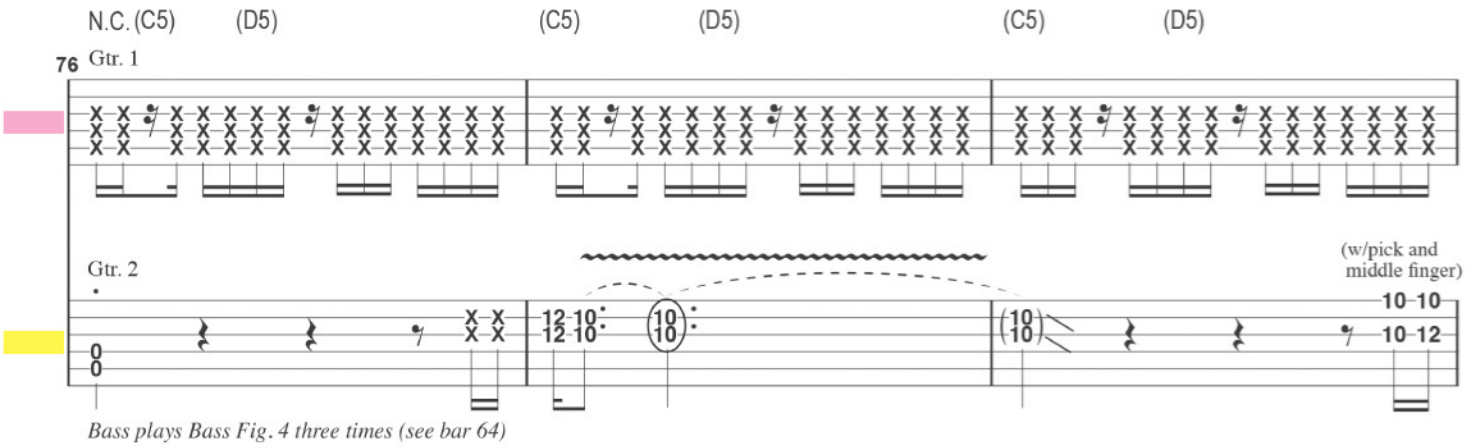

Grad. increase tempo to ♩= 106
whispering hands
gently
lead him away
Him away
D B♭sus2 B♭5 B♭5♯11 B♭ D5 C5 D5 C5
54
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2
w/bar -1/2 -1/2
P.M.
Bass
F Bridge (2:48, 4:31)
Him away
Yeah
Woo
D C D C5 N.C.(C5) (D5) D
Rhy. Fig. 3
58
P.M.
w/bar
Rhy. Fig. 3a
Bass Fig. 3
2nd time, skip ahead to 1 (bar 88)
Ah
(2nd time) Ah
yeah
yeah
Yeah yeah
Fuck it up
Fuck 'em up again
N.C.(C5) (D5) D N.C.(C5) (D5) D N.C.(C5) (D5) D
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3a (see bar 60)
Gtr. 1
61
P.M.
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 60)

G **Guitar Solo** (2:57)

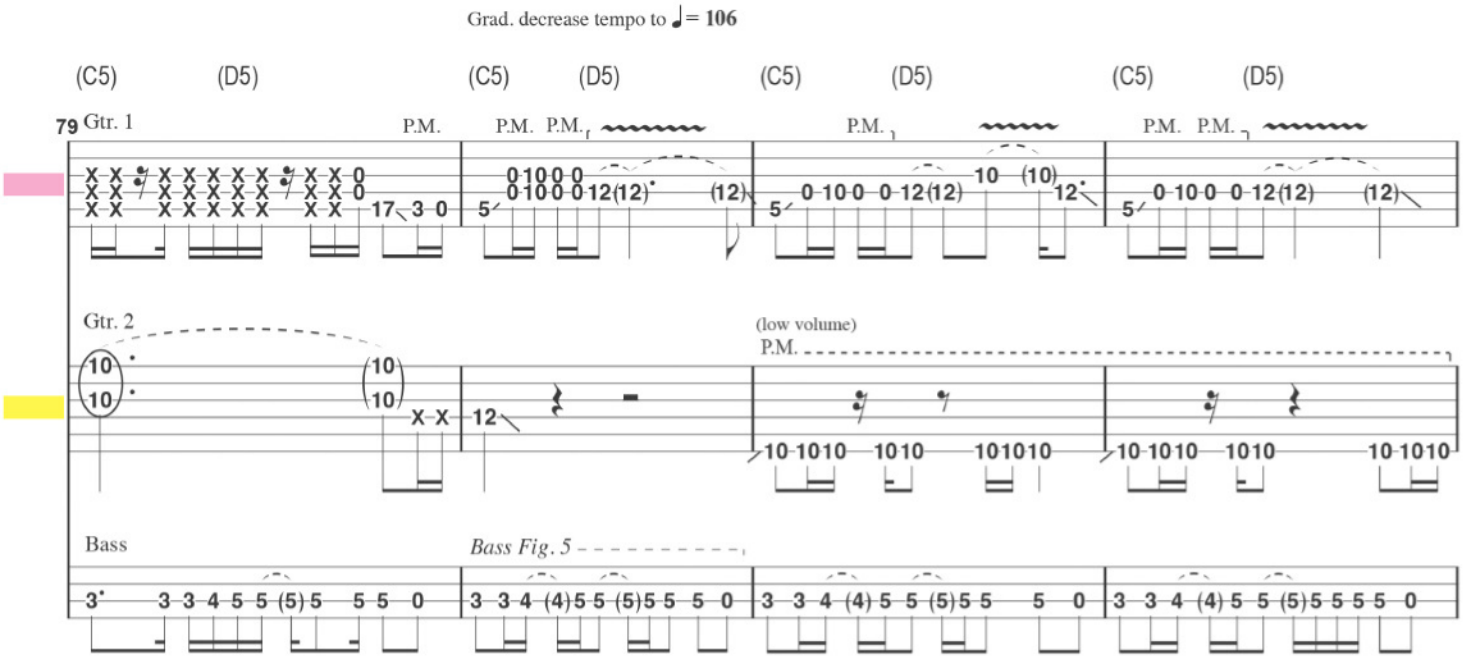
Grad. increase tempo to ♩= **108**

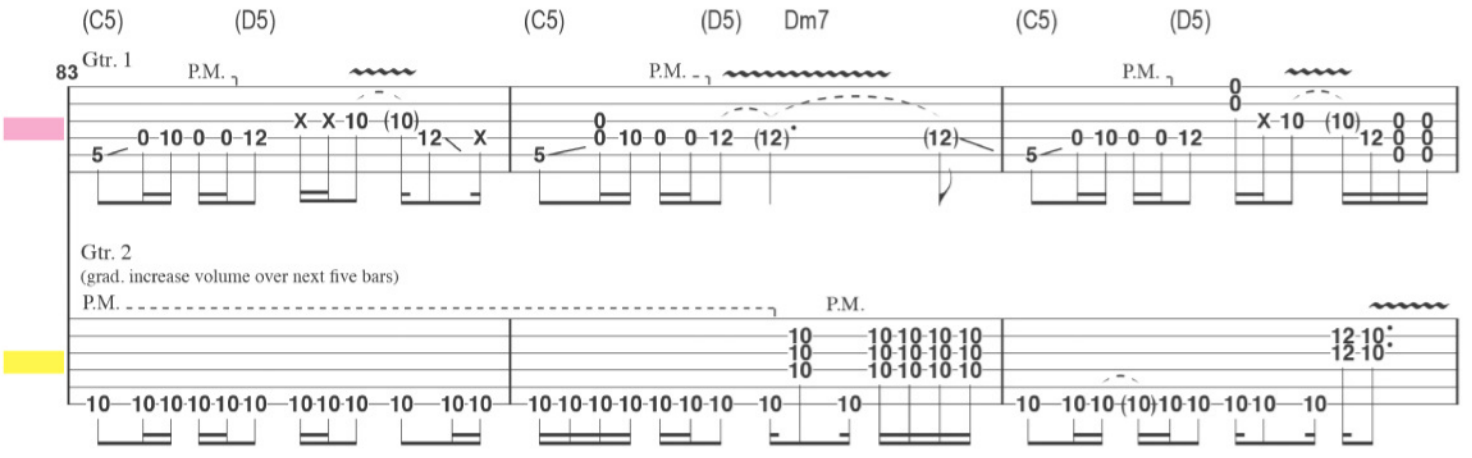


H **Interlude** (3:23)



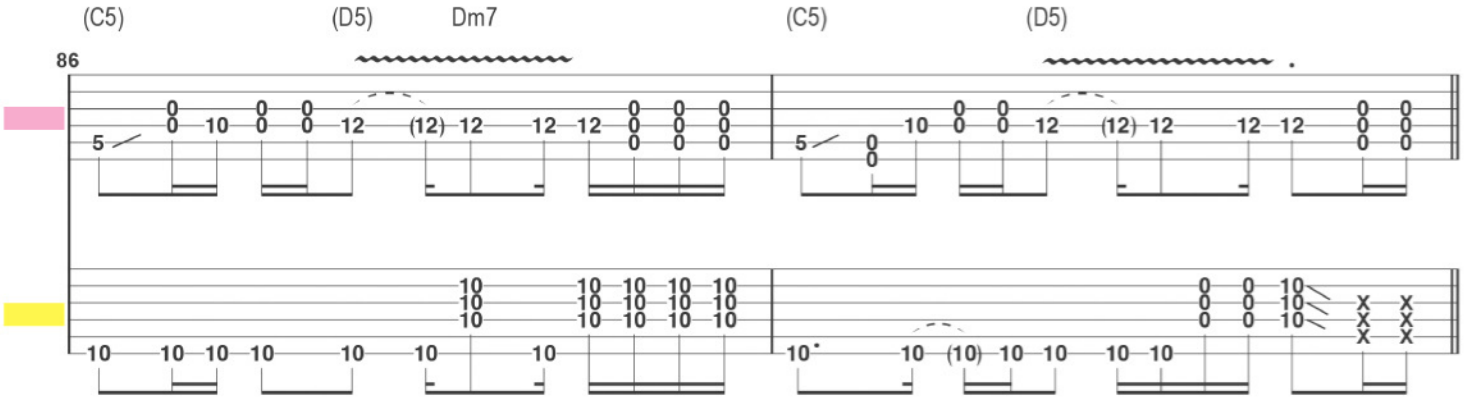
Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 three times (see bar 64)



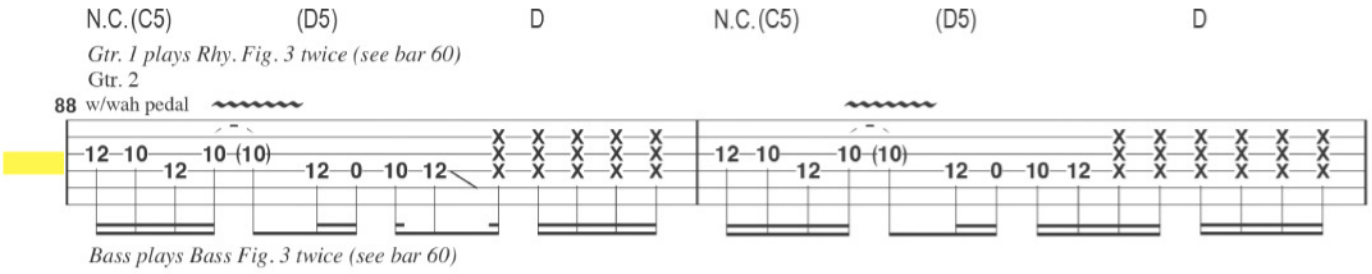


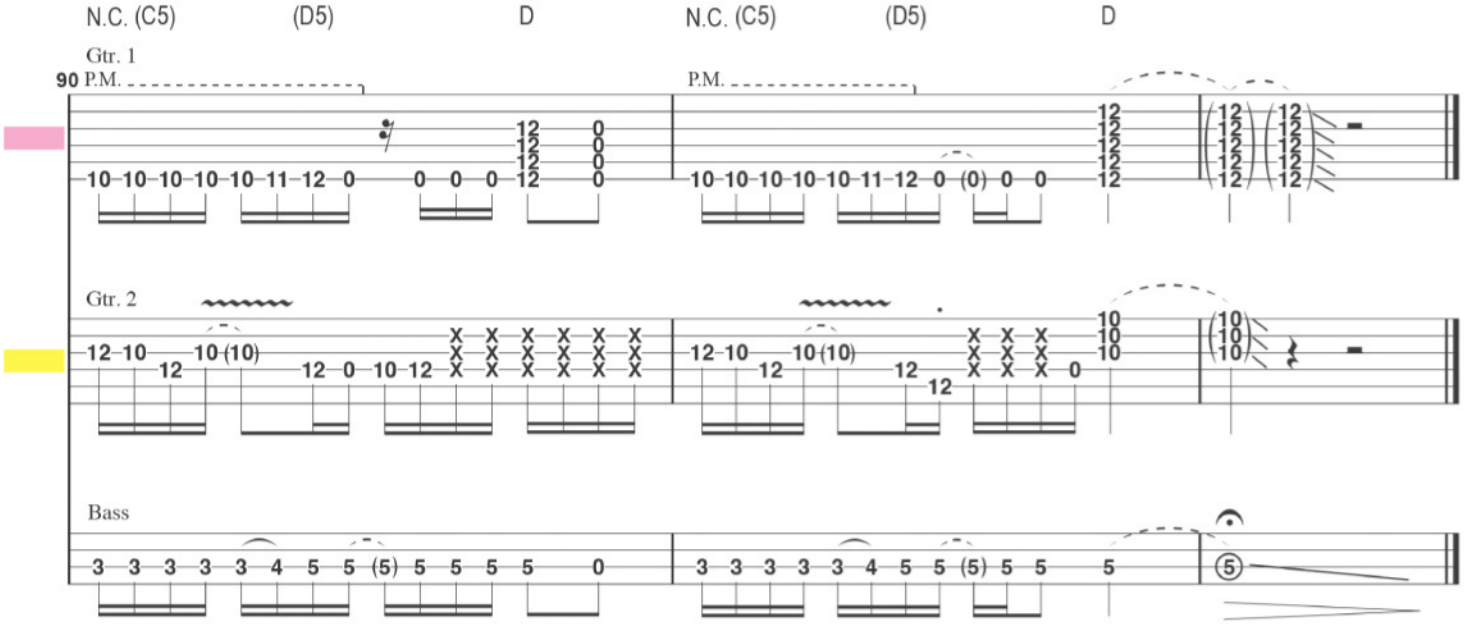
Bass plays Bass Fig. 5 five times (see bar 80)

Go back to E *3rd Chorus (bar 42)*



I (4:40)





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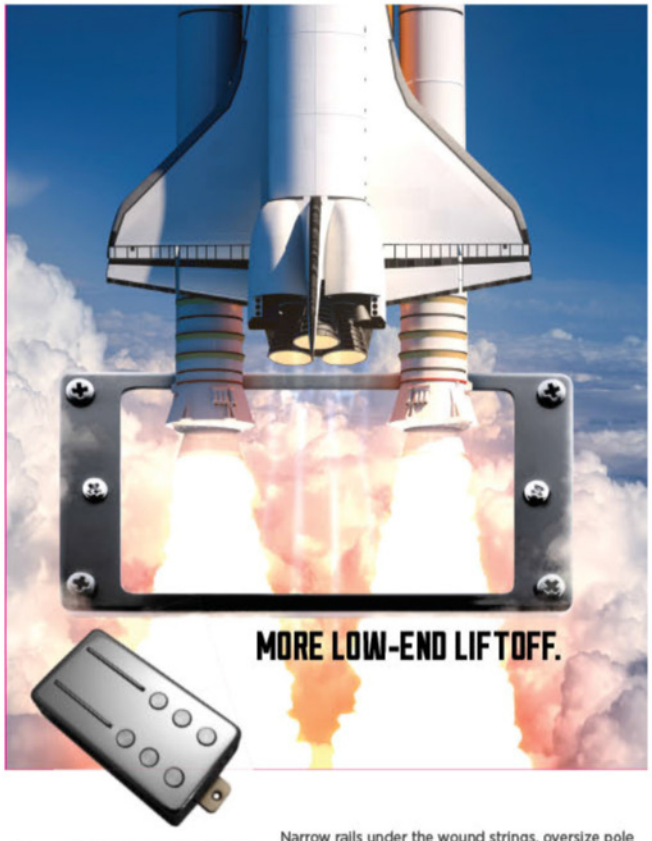

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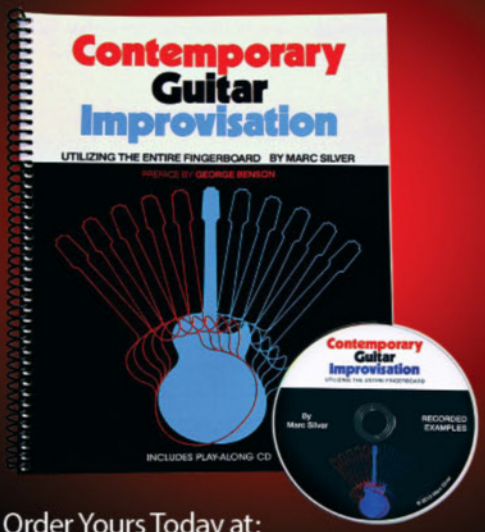

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1992-2000 MESA-BOOGIE DUAL RECTIFIER

CATEGORY: AMPLIFIER HEAD

[*clockwise from above*] A pre-2000 Mesa-Boogie Dual Rectifier; detail of a later three-channel version (photographed in 2010); Limp Bizkit's Wes Borland on stage in 1999

NO SINGLE PRODUCT played a bigger role in defining the sound of rock in the Nineties than the Mesa-Boogie Dual Rectifier amp. The great irony of this is that the Dual Rectifier was originally conceived to satisfy the demands of metal and hard rock guitarists during the late Eighties when the high-gain amplifier wars went into overdrive. Faced with increasing competition from companies like Soldano and a growing legion of techs who shifted from modifying amps to offering their own boutique models, Mesa started work on the Dual Rectifier in 1989, developing two distinct prototype circuits (Revisions A and B) before settling upon the Revision C circuit and officially introducing the Dual Rectifier in February 1992.

"It took us longer than we wanted to bring the Dual Rectifier to market because we kept working on it," said Mesa-Boogie R&D Director Doug West. "We were originally shooting for the late-Eighties hair metal crowd, but by the time we finished it, the grunge era began. We thought we were too late, but our timing turned out to be pretty good after all. The Rectifier Series became much more popular than we ever dreamed it would be, especially with the dramatic shift in music. From 1993 to 2004 those amps were over half of our business."

The Dual Rectifier's name originated from the amp's use of tube and silicon diode/solid-state power amp rectification to provide a choice of modern tight, fast attack (diode) or vintage-style smoother attack and sag (tube) via a Rectifier Select switch. The original Dual Rectifier produced from 1992 through 2000 was a 100-watt head with two switchable channels and three voices (Clean, Orange/Crunch, Red/Distortion). Other notable features included a Bias Select switch (for swapping 6L6 and EL34 tubes), Bold/Spongy (Variac) switch and a Channel Cloning switch that makes the two channels closely resemble each other. Initial production models from 1992-94 have a series effects loop, which switched to a parallel effects loop with Revision G in 1994.

There's not enough space to go into the finer details of Revisions C, D, E, F and G, but numerous online resources are available for those who care to dig deeper. Dedicated legions of fans support one revision or another, but if you're interested in an earlier revision it's best to try it yourself as one player's warmth is another's mud and so on. The Rev G model's massive, tight low end, throaty mids and super-saturated gain generally define what is now known as the Dual Rectifier's signature sound, as it was the version most commonly heard on a wide variety of records during the late Nineties.

The Dual Rectifier's popularity inspired a family of related products that included the Triple Rectifier (which did *not* have three rectifiers but offered 150 watts of output), Single Rectifier, Trem-O-Verb, Rect-O-Verb and Maverick. In 2000, Mesa shifted to a three-channel version of the Dual Rectifier with vastly improved clean tones, and that variant remains in production today.

A vast majority of Nineties rock bands of various genres used Dual Rectifier amps or Dual Rectifier-family amps. This includes grunge bands like Alice In Chains and Soundgarden, alternative bands like Bush, Everclear, Foo Fighters, Primus and 311, metal bands like Metallica, Nevermore, Rammstein and Tool, punk bands like Bad Religion, Blink-182 and Sublime and nu metal bands like Incubus, Korn, Limp Bizkit, Linkin Park and Sepultura. Suffice to say, if your band plays Nineties covers and you still prefer to use a real amp, you need to have a Dual Rectifier in your rig.

SUGGESTED SETTINGS

Nineties Metal Rhythm:
Red channel (2)
Master: 4
Presence: 4
Bass: 5, Mid: 3
Treble: 6 Gain: 7
Bold/Spongy switch: Bold
Rectifier switch: Silicon Diode (6L6 tubes recommended for tighter, brighter tone)

Modern Blues Rock:
Orange channel (1)
Master: 4
Presence: 2
Bass: 6
Mid: 6
Treble: 4
Gain: 3.5
Orange Channel Gain switch: Variable
High Gain; Rectifier switch: Tube

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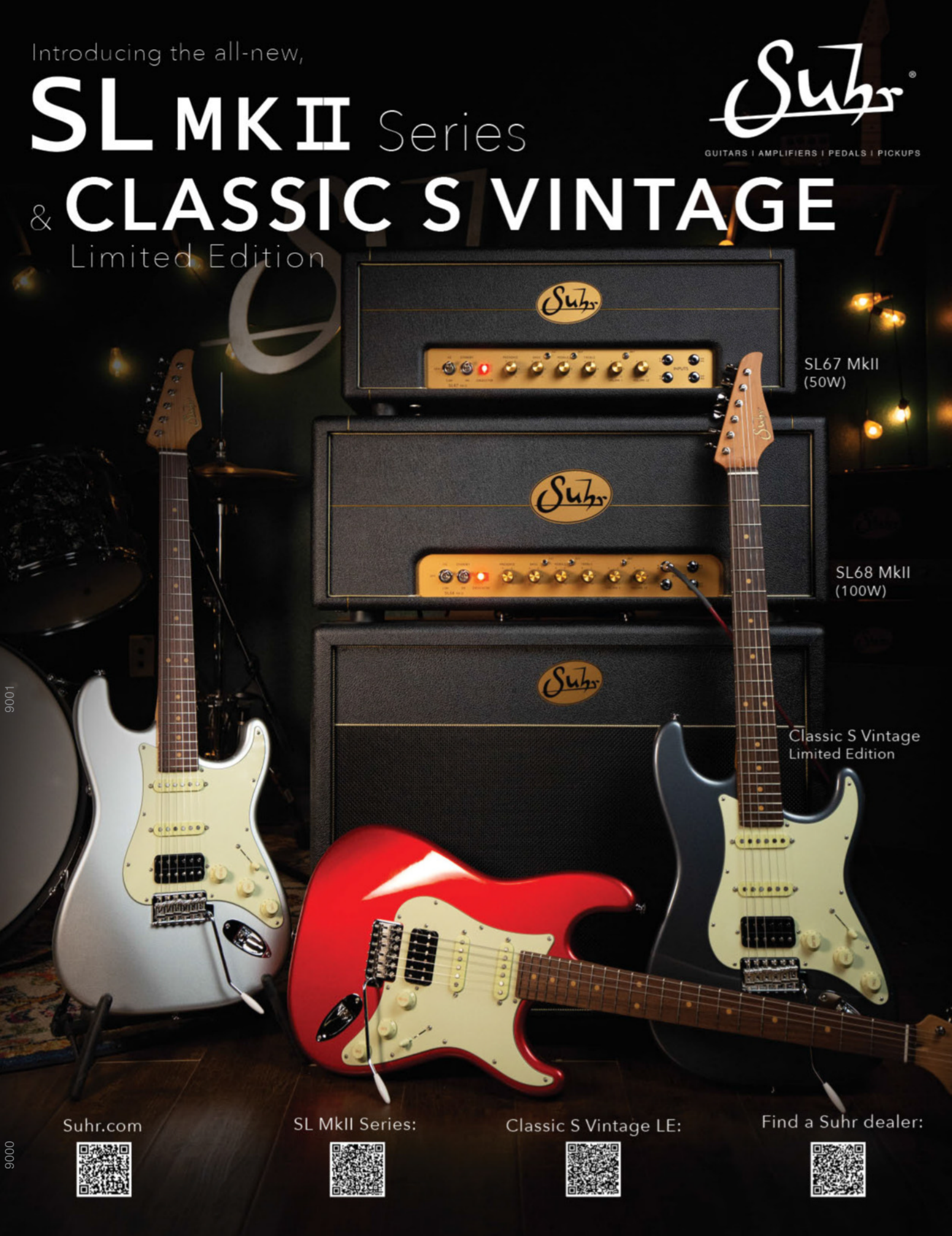
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